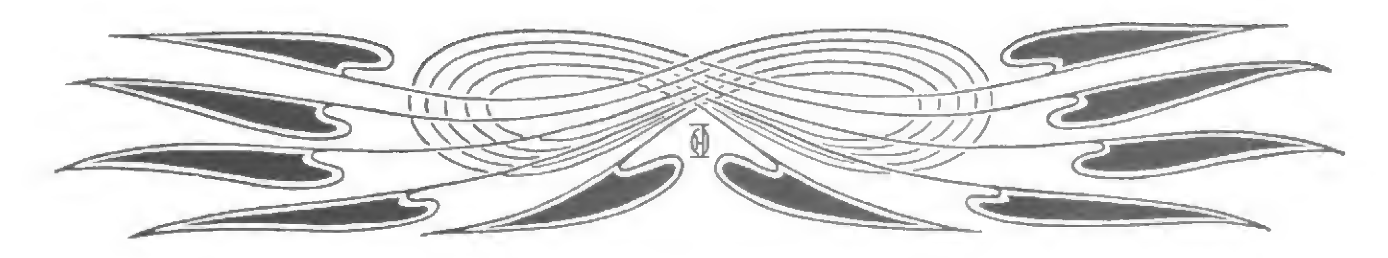
LA BELLE EPOQUE



THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

LA BELLE EPOQUE

An essay by Philippe Jullian
with illustrations selected by Diana Vreeland



THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

The exhibition was made possible by a generous grant from the Pierre Cardin Management Corporation.

The essay by Philippe Jullian, originally titled *Can Can and Flappers*, appeared in *La Belle Epoque*, published by William Morrow & Co., Inc., and is reprinted here with the permission of the Fondation de France.

Bradford D. Kelleher, *Publisher*
John P. O'Neill, *Editor in Chief*
Mary Stuart Steel, *Project Coordinator*
Roberta Savage, *Designer*

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Main entry under title:

Catalogue of an exhibition held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Includes reprint of Philippe Jullian's essay: La Belle Epoque.
Includes index.
1. Costume—Europe—History—20th century—Exhibitions.
2. Costume—France—Paris—History—20th century—Exhibitions.
3. Europe—Civilization—20th century—Exhibitions. 4. Europe—History —1871-1918—Exhibitions. 5. Paris (France)—Social life and customs— 20th century—Exhibitions. I. Jullian, Philippe. La Belle Epoque. 1982.
II. Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.)
GT720.B44 1982 391'.0094 82-22881
ISBN 0-87099-329-1

Composition by Innovative Graphics International, Ltd., New York
Printed by Rae Publishing Co., Inc., Cedar Grove, New Jersey
Bound by Sendor Bindery, Inc., New York

Front Cover: *The Bar at Maxim's,* Galland. *Maxim's:* a name, a restaurant, an audience, a stage. A world, and most assuredly La Belle Epoque, is captured in the name *Maxim's.* Decorated with red divans, reflecting mirrors, and soft lights, it was where the world supped, where reputations were made and broken, where jewels were exchanged for the favors of demi-mondaines, and where kings and queens drank champagne with their friends (and enemies) until dawn. It has been said that if an entrance failed to make every head turn that the *arriviste* should no longer bother to come. This was not as difficult a feat as it might appear because the basis of *Maxim's* clientele was upper-middle class, and the purpose of dining there was to see who came with whom!

Back Cover: *La Dépêche,* Georges Defeure. Born in Holland and of Javanese descent, Georges Defeure arrived in Paris at the age of eighteen and quickly became one of La Belle Epoque's masters of poster art. Fond of Baudelaire's poetry and gifted at design, he created a style that was recognized by its depiction of isolated, fancifully dressed, forceful women. This poster was used to advertise the journal *La Dépêche*. The gown and hat are Defeure's own design, a skill he developed as a sideline.

INTRODUCTION

La Belle Epoque emerged in the last half of the nineteenth century from the dream and the reality of the grandiose plans of Napoleon III and Baron Haussmann for the transformation of Paris. Philippe Jullian, in his essay, defines the dates of the period as 1900 to 1914, but I feel very strongly that its spirit began to develop much earlier, and it is its spirit that we are in search of.

Paris was the center of the action. No city had ever been so well arranged to receive the world and, indeed, it did. Czars, emperors, kings, maharajahs, and princes; the *gratin* and the nouveaux riches; heiresses and Middle European bankers; anarchists and apaches—all the world rubbed shoulders and filed in and out of this splendid and glorious city.

"The City of Light"—the dappled shadows of chestnut trees on the broad boulevards and seemingly endless avenues—splendid horses, shining and glamorous, with their owners sitting in exquisite carriages displaying audacious faces and pretty parasols—outdoor cafés and lovely restaurants surrounded by forests in the Bois de Boulogne—"the Bois" where children were taken for tea dressed in lace and velvet and where famous demi-mondaines, pretty cocottes, grandes dames, and the rich men who maintained them flocked in the evening amid the splendor of perfumed furs, long gloves, and huge hats. Remember that this was the time when women first dined in restaurants and, as they were in public, they always wore hats.

So much was happening.

Painters were finding a way of painting shadows and movement, light, color, and vitality—Impressionism, les Fauves, Cubism.

Writers of the entire Western world—England, France, Italy, Russia, Scandinavia, the United States of America—were writing the literature of a great hour of tales and tellers.

Mahler, the magnificence of his music. Franz Lehár, composer of delightful operettas always in the air—Prince Danilo "going to Maxim's where all the girls are dreams"—and the lovely absurdity of the world of Ruritania, a world of pretense and happiness, singing and dancing and romance. Offenbach and the cancan—resounding with high kicks and shouts and the bravos of the audience. The beautiful waltzes of Johann Strauss and everyone in love with love and power in a romantic dream.

Highlife, lowlife, life, life—grandeur and poetry—and a real sense of fun. Life was vital and meant to be lived.

Along came the motor car, the telephone, the camera, the movies, electricity, radium, and the exciting suggestion that one day we would all fly.

As we slipped into the twentieth century, the tango in its full restraint and foreign sensuality emerged from the Argentine—Diaghilev and his great musicians, artists, and dancers appeared from Russia—beauties and non-beauties with millionaire fathers presented themselves from the United States—and Marcel Proust put all society's dreams and meanderings into immortal prose that will be read with wonderment forever.

Across the Channel, a great house and country life raged in England—the Mistress of Empire—magnificent and rich and all-powerful. Ocean liners and yachts with crews of one hundred plying between the two continents—the Flora Dora sextet, and the Gaiety Girls. Edward VII and his beautiful queen, Alexandra, reigned over a world of pomp and circumstance, forests and lawns, splendid gardens, and a very high, very fast society. He was king of England, emperor of India, and all the world respected the power he represented.

Society was a pursuit, a game, a sport. Fashion was competition.

And one day it was all over in a flash.... August 4, 1914.... World War I....

Diana Vreeland

LA BELLE EPOQUE

La Belle Epoque*. Myth has replaced history to such a degree that these words immediately conjure up a music-hall scene: showgirls in black stockings, pink velvet bodices, and feathered hats dancing the cancan—their partners, English gentlemen in evening dress or uniformed Austrian officers or even the artists of Montmartre. If the music hall can afford it, a hackney carriage drives across the back of the set, or perhaps one of the first motorcars. Regardless of perspective, the backcloth shows the Eiffel Tower and the Moulin Rouge together, or the Casino at Monte Carlo.

In the cinema, the *Belle Epoque* style was much favored by the Viennese directors Erich von Stroheim and Joseph von Sternberg working in Hollywood after World War I. The films of Jean Renoir in France and later of Luchino Visconti in Italy made use of the images of a lost paradise.

As a subtitle or on a band round a book, the words *La Belle Epoque* promise delightful evocations, whether true or false (it does not really matter, and in any case the difference is negligible): a lady from the highest society leaving her huge house to go to a party somewhere, a footman on the steps, an impeccable coachman or chauffeur in attendance. The sparkle of her jewelry and the rustle of her train contrast with the evening suit of her companion, who personifies the man on the de Reszke cigarette advertisements. Or, in front of a charming country house, small girls with golden curls under lacy bonnets play diabolo with sailor-suited little boys who will be killed in the war. Or, again, in a box at the opera, superb women, their dresses a little too low-cut, listen to Melba singing *Thaïs* while in the stalls gentlemen in evening dress ogle the dancers' legs through their monocles.

For historians, *La Belle Epoque* is the period when professional diplomats kept watch to insure that nothing happened to upset the order established by the treaties initialed by respected monarchs, when ambassadors were still repeating the words of Disraeli and Bismarck. In the words Proust gave to the Marquis de Norpois, Turkey was "the sick man of Europe" and Austria the "double-headed monarchy." In spite of friction and rivalries, the "European concert" led the world.

Portrait of Sarah Bernhardt, Georges Clairin. Sarah Bernhardt—the "Divine Sarah"—was the greatest actress of the stage during La Belle Epoque and the originator of the star system. Alexandre Dumas described her as: "Queen of Attitude and Princess of Gesture. This head of a virgin on a broomlike body." Bernhardt embodied the myth of the femme fatale and fin-de-siècle aesthetics for three generations.



Marcel Proust, Jacques-Emile Blanche. Marcel Proust was loved by his friends for his generosity, kindliness, unexampled courtesy, and sensitivity to their desires and perturbations of spirit. The duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre spoke of his "verbal gaiety," which induced people to seek his company as eagerly "as if he had been a particularly inaccessible cocotte." Proust was the social archivist of La Belle Epoque and drew upon his illustrious acquaintances for characters in his writing. Countess Greffuhle became the duchesse de Guermantes, Charles Haas was translated into Swann, and the baron de Charlus is recognizable as Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fesenzac. Proust interrogated everyone from duchesses to headwaiters and as a result recreated human life with love, malice, and social and historical density.

As the witty English cartoonist Osbert Lancaster remarked in his memoirs, soldiers took a sporting attitude to war that came to an end only with the horror of the trenches in 1914. "If the relieving column did not arrive, or the ammunition ran out, so much the worse for the regiment; it was unthinkable, so accustomed to victory was that generation, that the ultimate outcome of the campaign would be affected. And even if by some extraordinary and terrible turn of events, or an act of betrayal on the part of Liberal politicians, the war itself should be lost, no threat to the British way of life would result; a whole battalion might be wiped out, national prestige sadly dimmed, but not a penny more would go on the income tax, the Derby would still be run, and silk hats and frock-coats would still be worn at the church parade" (Osbert Lancaster, *All Done from Memory,* Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1953, pp. 78–79.)

To divide history from legend, this period must be placed exactly both in time and in space, for it was not equally glorious in every country in Europe, not to mention the rest of the world.

First of all, it must be said that the different social classes must have found it very different as regards happiness. Thus, the life of farm workers and country people remained much the same as it had been two generations earlier, in spite of some improvement in agricultural instruments. The very fast development of the industrial machinery that had caused so much upheaval in the nineteenth century finally led to a reduction in working hours, and trade unionism obtained definite advantages for workers. It was, however, in no way *La Belle Epoque* for the Lancashire miner, the silk weaver from Lyons, or any of those ranked among "the poor." No doubt the charity of "decent people" temporarily relieved these misfortunes, without doing much to eliminate their causes. There were the "honest poor," who worked hard and showed their gratitude, and the "idle poor," who drank and insulted the sisters of charity. However, under Tolstoy's influence, the hearts of the middle classes began to soften, and the German journalist Max Nordau was able to write: "The worker today is what the noble savage was in the eighteenth century." A monument, alas since demolished, was erected as a vestige of the paternalism of "decent people" opposite the Bon Marché in Paris; it represented the owner of that shop and the Baroness de Hirsch in furs and muffs, leaning benevolently toward a beggar woman and her children. Nonetheless, before we sneer at them, we should remember the virtues of these "decent people." A family would bleed itself dry to avoid one of its number going bankrupt, or to provide a dowry for an ugly daughter. They were prepared to sacrifice a son for their country, a daughter to the convent; they paid wages to retired servants and invited their most tedious female relations to stay in the country. Family feeling extended far and wide—one needs only to read the interminable birth, marriage, and death notices—and opposed any trend that threatened that institution however slightly. Hence Gide's words: "Family, I hate you." *L'Illustration,* which was the favorite magazine of "decent people," shows pictures of dynasties in front of their factories, congratulates heroic officers, charitable priests, daring leaders of industry, and ladies of these families doing good works.

It becomes possible to refer to a *Belle Epoque* when considering people who could afford to put money aside or become landlords; in short, people who benefited, however modestly, from capitalism, for, above all, it was a period when people had confidence in cash. The lower middle classes, clerks, and primary-school teachers had more days off and went away for their holidays—not very far away, it is true, but nevertheless they no longer thought of themselves as being attached to the place where they worked and often finally achieved the ideal of living on their incomes. For those who had always lived on their incomes, the era was indeed a glorious one.

In time, *La Belle Epoque* covers the years 1900 to 1914. The tendency is to date it from 1880 so as to include the Impressionist painters, such as Toulouse-Lautrec, or even to turn it into a result of the Second Empire, when in reality it was more like a resurrection of it. The nineteenth century had ended badly. Its last decade saw a bitter realization of its own faults, and optimism at scientific progress gave way to a kind of disenchantment. Materialism undermined the marvelous but contributed no enthusiasm. Patriotism flung armies into colonial conquest before flinging them at one another, which alarmed the "decent people" and exasperated the workers whom socialism was teaching to think. This disenchantment was reflected in two movements with frequent interruptions: the Decadent movement among intellectuals and the Anarchic movement among the masses.

Comparing the state of their society to what they knew of dying empires, writers were proclaiming themselves as decadent for the first time. All passions were permitted, as were daring styles of all kinds. The avant-garde dates from the nineties and to it we owe Symbolism, that nebulous art, pursuing the dream, refusing to separate painting from music and from poetry, happily blending their values. A sad atmosphere originated in the damp plains of





Marchesa Luisa Casati, Photograph by Baron de Meyer. The only woman Gabriele d'Annunzio said ever astonished him, the eccentric and extravagant Luisa Casati was painted by Giovanni Boldini, photographed by Baron de Meyer, and caricatured by SEM (Georges Goursat). She wore necklaces of snakes and rested on pillows of leopards, all of them alive. The "Divine Marchesa" owned a palace in Milan, another in Venice, and apartments in Paris. There she kept likenesses of her many lovers, molded as wax figurines. She swept through La Belle Epoque in a wake of suicides, orchids, and literary and artistic masterpieces.



Olga de Meyer, Photograph by Baron de Meyer. A professional beauty said to be the illegitimate daughter of the Prince of Wales and Blanche, duchess of Caraciolla, Olga Alberta met Adolf Meyer in 1897 and married him in 1899. The adventurous couple formed part of the Prince of Wales "set"; in fact, Edward conferred the title upon de Meyer so that he and his wife could sit in the royal box at his coronation. Olga, a lady of penetrating elegance, was frequently photographed by her husband, whose images in soft shades of gray enhanced her exquisiteness.

Belgium and spread like a cloud all over Europe, producing the occasional masterpiece and giving rise to countless failures. In his book *Degeneracy,* which caused a great stir at the time, Max Nordau put all esthetic curiosities, vices, and follies into one bag. Spiritism developed, strange sects abounded, esoterism occupied a place that religion, being too official, could not properly fill.

Anarchy was the violent expression of a hatred for the established order of things, for sacrosanct values: the monarchy, the army, the church. It was despair of ever achieving that happiness which too many forces prevented one from approaching. The empress of Austria, King Umberto of Italy, President Carnot of France, and various grand dukes were assassinated; a bomb went off in the Chamber of Deputies. The French anarchist Ravachol became a sort of hero, for memories of the Paris Commune uprising were not yet dead. There were also outrages during *La Belle Epoque*, but the bombs exploded in a sort of euphoria, without the slightest repercussion, except, of course, in Russia. But it would be as well to state from the outset that Russia experienced only the most distant echoes of gaiety.

Whereas outrages only made interesting news items, one peaceful death took on a symbolic significance: that of Queen Victoria on January 2, 1901. Once the woman who, somewhat arbitrarily, had represented moral values and adherence to principles in their strictest form had gone, it was permissible to enjoy oneself. Her heir lost no time in doing so, and the English equivalent of *La Belle Epoque* was the Edwardian era. It was considered in bad taste to be indignant: scandal lost its edge. The last five years of the century had been shaken by two scandals, the extent of which amazes us today when one gets to the bottom of them. In France the Dreyfus Case divided the country into two camps, the nationalists and the upholders of truth (the latter too easily confused with the left). In Britain the trial of Oscar Wilde also represented the crushing of a minority (that of homosexuals; Dreyfus had been a Jew) by a society whose conventions were threatened. The Mayerling drama in Austria had struck a blow at the monarchy. The Panama Canal affair discredited the parliamentary system.

The Boers' resistance held British power in check and earned the old queen the insults of the rest of Europe. China rejected colonization. The century did indeed finish badly, and "decent people" had plenty of reason for anxiety. "Decent people" were the people of note, the establishment for the British, those who clung to their privileges because of their responsibilities, mainly landowners and clergymen who were then in their service as the army is in the service of democracy today. Anarchists cursed "the alliance of army and church." The judges and heads of commerce and industry consisted almost entirely of "decent people"—the world of banking a little less so, as it was international and often Jewish. Paul Bourget wrote for his readers, who were "decent people," that the pillars of the European order were: the House of Lords, the body of Prussian commissioned officers, the Académie Française, and the College of Cardinals. And, reassured, they proceeded to buy Russian stock.

The year 1900, which was the year of the Universal Exhibition in Paris, really does mark an overturning of European attitudes and is not just a convenient reference point. The pessimism of the end of the century gave way to optimism: the twentieth century would be the century of electricity, that "fairy" who would bewitch the Exhibition's fantastic pavilions, whereas the nineteenth century had languished under the black sign of coal, painfully extracted from the earth. Electricity, in contrast, came from water, was clean and flexible, and had unlimited power. This quotation from Gustave Geoffroy's artistic criticism clearly expresses the optimism, tinged with estheticism and socialism, released by the exhibition: "The masses should also look at themselves. They are the essence of life, the mainspring of all this work, the raison d'être of all this art. Let them listen to the educators sprung from their own midst; they must realize their destiny and the part they have to play.... It is a coming together of peoples, a universal harmony. May this force give the reason to art and ideas against the missiles of steel."

In politics, the great powers were watching each other and arming themselves, but still respected the decisions of the Congress of Berlin, which, twenty-five years earlier, had established a balance between the two powers of Great Britain and Germany. It is true that Russian imperialism and French *revanchisme* were threats, but the Franco-Russian rapprochement was no more of a threat to peace than the Triple Alliance among Germany, Austria, and Italy. And when the Kaiser denounced the Yellow Peril, politicians whispered: "Let him enjoy himself." It was therefore possible to believe that a period of peace was beginning, and the illusion continued until the Balkan wars and Wilhelm II's "coups" shook this optimism. But the progress of socialism seemed worrying in a different way.

This euphoria was encouraged by improvements in standards of living that filtered all through the social strata to the lower mid-

Caroline Otéro, Liane de Pougy, and Jean Lorrain, Cartoon by SEM. A Parisian master of graphic art, Georges Goursat, better known by his pseudonym SEM, drew pitiless cartoons of Belle Epoque society with a wicked hand and scathing eye. *Below,* La Belle Otéro, known in the United States as the Suicidal Siren, and her rival among the great courtesans of the day, Liane de Pougy, are shown accompanied by Jean Lorrain, a notable art critic. A dancer who held princes and millionaires in the palm of her thoroughly bejeweled hand, La Belle Otéro displayed great nonchalance in her command and destruction of her lovers. Also skillful at the roulette wheel, she achieved all the heights to be scaled during her reign over the demimonde.



dle classes, thanks to electricity, running water, speed of transport, and, as we shall see, the ever-increasing forms of recreation. So *La Belle Epoque* was born with a century the first ten years of which fulfilled all that people expected of it, "people" here meaning mainly the "decent people," then the workers risen from the proletariat; it lasted exactly fourteen years.

Now is the moment to point out that this era was not equally happy and glorious in all countries. France, to whom the expression *La Belle Epoque* belongs, experienced euphoria more flamboyantly than other nations. Great artistic creations developed there in that atmosphere of well-being, which means that it can no longer be considered as superficial. Proust and Debussy, for example, were part of *La Belle Epoque* inasmuch as their estheticism extended over a society for which beauty was the prime consideration. In 1900 France was rich, her political dissensions calm. She was becoming a republic and believed in a future of social justice. It is true that there were several scandals, but none of them became as vitriolic as Panama.

They always involved the discovery of a woman somewhere among the files, just as a woman was always discovered under the bed in Georges Feydeau's farces. President Félix Faure, who died in his mistress's arms, had a very *Belle Epoque* death, inspiring popular songwriters without plunging the nation into mourning. England smiled in the end at her king's escapades, and the Belgians were happy to think that King Leopold was entertaining the most beautiful dancer in Paris. The statue of the Parisienne above the triumphal gateway to the Exhibition, her arms open wide, dressed in the latest fashion, clearly expresses the supremacy of woman (or, rather, of love).

The Exhibition, which drew millions of visitors, was an act of homage to the working world as much as the expression of a new form of art. Witness the words of the poet and journalist Jean Lorrain, who was at the same time the strictest and the most dazzled of *La Belle Epoque*'s critics, about the new beauty: "At last the water tower begins to work, and with a glow of stained glass, frames within its multicolored façade fountains and cascades first of liquid sapphire and ruby, then of topaz and sardonyx. But the most beautiful sight of all is the dark, reflecting span of the river, the Seine suddenly constricted between the Palaces of the Rue des Nations and the greenhouses of the Rue de Paris, bearing reflections and flames in its waters, the Seine transformed into a stream of incandescent lava flowing between the stones of the embankments and the pillars of the bridges. Oh! The magic of the night, night with its everchanging forms! Then the Porte Binet and its grotesque towers change into translucent enamel and assume a certain grandeur."

Then Lorrain gives us a description of a fairground: "In an apocalyptic frenzy, roundabouts peopled by pigs, giraffes, camels, cars, and bicycles, and with the mountains of Russia painted on a circular backcloth, turn and pass, blaze, glow and flash, sparkling with tinsel, gilt, and mirrors in a truly Dantesque whirl, with a rustle of skirts, the flash of a breastplate, the shine of a helmet, a fluttering of blouses, the occasional flame of a silk scarf or of hair, manes, tippets, and chignons. The electric light whitens colors and flattens silhouettes."

Paris has never had so many theaters, music halls, large restaurants, or cafés. The provinces, the South in particular, followed the movement; Toulouse, for example, was known as the Athens of the Third Republic. "Decent people" kept their appearance of being in power and the mode of life that goes with it. The middle classes were at last learning to spend in the face of so many temptations, the most pressing of which, after 1910, was the motorcar. The workers, listening to Jaurès, believed in a better future.

"La Peri," Design by Léon Bakst. The magical and swirling world of fantasy introduced to Paris by Serge Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes is captured in this costume design by Léon Bakst, created for Nijinsky for his role in "La Peri." It was the spectacle of costumes such as this one, with its fluidity and sumptuousness, that coincided with fashion designer Paul Poiret's decision to create magnificent, brilliantly colored clothes with an Oriental influence in order to enthrall his customers—just as did the Ballets Russes in its performances. The Oriental look became the rage, and the star of Léon Bakst rose with the same sparkle and glitter as that of his designs.

After Paris, Vienna was a *Belle Epoque* capital, even more so than Paris if we are considering only the world of pleasure. The waltz, the operettas, and masterpieces such as *Der Rosenkavalier* tend to make us think today that the old emperor reigned over subjects who cared for nothing but dancing. One need only read Musil and Rilke to realize the profound malaise that was preparing the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. But Vienna—such a provincial town today—is still living on the memory of its *Belle Epoque*, like those prima donnas who give a farewell concert every three or four years. In Vienna, as in Paris, the Second Empire tradition persisted, without the interruptions of a war and a revolution, but shaken by the terrible economic crisis of 1873.

In the Stadtpark there stands a monument to Johann Strauss, who is the perfect symbol of Viennese sensuality. It shows the composer playing the violin, stepping out of a sculpted frame of intertwined women, some veiled and some less so, with fine profiles and superb bosoms, representing the Waltz. This huge trinket contains elements of Rodin and closely resembles Klimt.

As has been said, *La Belle Epoque* was a new Second Empire with Franz Lehár as Offenbach, and the world of *The Merry Widow* was the same world as that of *La Vie Parisienne.* The Orient Express, linking the two pleasure capitals of Europe, was full of Rumanian princes, Turkish pashas, Polish noblemen, Balkan royalty, all determined to "drink their fill of it," as Offenbach's characters sang in 1867. Sometimes the operetta world turned sour, as when the Serbs threw their king and his wife Queen Draga out of the palace windows, and it is a fact that that famous day in Sarajevo began like an operetta: folk dancing and a flamboyant royal couple in love. The members of a royal court and the archdukes gave Vienna great style, and society was exclusively aristocratic, although everything of interest was patronized by Jews. In Paris not all the elegant women who set the fashion came from the Faubourg St. Germain—far from it—and the smart world was much more closely connected with the world of art. The old Princess Metternich, who had shone at the court of Napoleon III, gave parties that, with charity as an excuse, united different circles, and the mayor of Vienna, Lüger, saw to it that there was dancing everywhere, especially in suburban pleasure gardens and open-air cafés. They sang:

Wien, Wien, nur du allein
Wirst stets die Stadt meiner Traüme sein.

("Vienna, Vienna, you alone will always be the city of my dreams.") They adored fancy-dress processions like the one, around 1880, for which the painter Mackart designed the costumes. The most sumptuous was held in honor of the fifty years of Emperor Franz Josef's reign, and the greatest names of the Empire capered about dressed in costumes of the time when their ancestors had made their names. There were processions of flower-decked carriages on the Prater. Masked balls were all the rage and served as subject matter for Hugo von Hofmannsthal and many librettists. Frequently, a kind of premonitory sadness crept into these celebrations, that basically rather pleasant anguish expressed so languorously by gypsy violins. Around 1900 gypsies began to appear everywhere in France. One of them, called Rigo, with smouldering eyes and enormous whiskers, carried off Clara Ward, a splendid American woman who had just married the Prince de Chimay. The ex-princess appeared in a figure-hugging costume beside her lover on the stage of the Folies Bergère. There was a terrible scandal.

Even without its masquerades, Vienna was the most colorful capital in Europe because of its Balkan and Hungarian elements and the variety of its uniforms. Its restaurants were almost as good as those in Paris, and its cake shops were better. Even today there is still a "pre-1914" feeling about Sacher and Demel's. It need hardly be said that Professor Freud did not join in the fun.

In London there was hardly any connection between the social and intellectual worlds, but in contrast the political and social worlds were intimately linked. Power was still in the hands of the great families, and "political hostesses" made and unmade ministries in the course of a weekend; the great noblemen shared out government posts between them. In his memoirs, Somerset Maugham recalls having heard someone say: "Jimmy can have India, Tom can have Ireland and Archie can have the Exchequer. . . ." César Ritz founded the first of his great hotels in London because, as he said, "I realized that here were a great many people ready to spend huge amounts for the best that was obtainable." After 1900, money began to have the edge over aristocracy while at the same time assuming its habits and titles. The "decent people" who had owned the land and held the power for so long felt themselves overtaken by the arrival of Chamberlain and Asquith. They were not good at resisting the attacks of those who resented their vast fortunes. Victorian integrity disintegrated. In 1913 some ministers, of whom Lloyd George was one, had to admit that, although they had not actually accepted bribes,


BAKST
1922

they had unduly favored the Marconi Telegraph Company, in which they held large numbers of shares.

London was truly the capital of the world during Edward VII's reign. One could live magnificently there, but it was still difficult to enjoy oneself and people went to Paris for real pleasure and to Italy for the esthetic life. Provincial England remained Victorian, and religion retained its importance—chiefly a decorative religion: "There goes God's butler," said a great lady, watching the archbishop of Canterbury pass by. The church parade after morning service on Sundays was one of those rites, simultaneously sacred and profane, that enable sociologists to define a social group. Osbert Lancaster draws this sketch of a parish frequented by the middle classes of Kensington: ". . . the verger opened the doors at the final verse of the closing hymn. Then a short pause, a rustling murmur as the congregation rose from its knees gathering up prayer books and feather boas and adjusting veils and gloves, and the first worshipers would emerge blinking a little in the bright sun pursued by the rolling chords of the voluntary. Soon the whole churchyard and street were a mass of elaborate, pale-shaded millinery, great cartwheels à la Lily. Elsie decorated with monstrous roses and doves in flight, old-fashioned bonnets trimmed with Parma violets, among which the glittering top hats, ceaselessly doffed and replaced, provided the sharper, more definite accents" (Lancaster, *op. cit.*, pp. 72–73). Nowhere more than in England did an official clergy, composed of rich men not overconcerned with metaphysics, give "decent people" the assurance that everything was for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

The young German Empire, wholly concerned with acquiring the biggest army, the biggest factories, only participated in *La Belle Epoque* through increased prosperity. The Germans were moral and megalomaniac like Emperor Wilhelm, and the aristocracy was too sure of its importance to bother about being smart. With an admirable organization, few painters except those of an obscure avant-garde, the cult of Wagner followed by the dictatorship of Strauss, the importance still accorded to the philosophers Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, the Germans could not allow themselves the wasteful and carefree attitudes typical of the prewar period. No one in Berlin would have said, *"Après nous le déluge."* The sense of humor was confined to the Munich newspaper *Simplicissimus.* There was, however, a Viennese-operetta feeling about the scandals, such as the musician Tosti carrying off the queen of Saxony. The quality of life was improving rapidly. Town planning was the most advanced in Europe and methods of transport the quickest. Germany was the most modern country by far, and her progress alarmed other countries even more than her armaments. Paul Valéry wrote an article entitled "A Methodical Conquest" about it, which gave much more food for thought than his early poems.

Far more than elsewhere, the ruling class favored the new art. Thus, the grand duke of Hesse encouraged the Darmstadt school and had a whole district of his capital built by Joseph Maria Olbrich. Weimar remained an intellectual center. The *Blaue Reiter* group was formed in Munich, the official artistic capital. The German *Belle Epoque* was opulent and serious but scarcely international. The euphoria of the first years of this century depended greatly on pleasant relations (from banking to ballet) between people from every corner of Europe. Excessive ideas of grandeur, a lack of tact, and a basically moralistic attitude prevented Berlin from becoming a happy capital on the level of Vienna.

If opulence was present in Russia, it lay in disorder and waste. As to serious matters, it turned quickly to mysticism if not nihilism. "We are dancing on a volcano" was the refrain of a sumptuous and unbalanced aristocracy. As for professional dancers, it took the genius of a Diaghilev to teach them to dance to any music other than Tchaikovsky's. Fabergé's creations—precious, amazingly intricate, in appalling taste, and utterly useless—are archetypal *Belle Epoque* trinkets. The boyars who colonized the French Riviera and settled in Paris and Rome brought their panache and a kind of madness to the life of pleasure and laid the foundations for the arrival of the ballet companies, which were the greatest esthetic creation of the age.

Although Scandinavia, sinking quietly into democracy, took no part in the festivities, Italy on the other hand behaved like a woman who is always a little overdressed to hide the fact that she is rather hard up. There was a desperation in her enjoyment, as there is in the novels of D'Annunzio. That the great poet should have thought of himself as a great nobleman clearly shows the unbalanced state of the country. However, for wealthy foreigners Rome, Venice, and Florence, each offering different delights, were like so many heavens. The Italians brought beauty to the European party. Thus the Marchesa Casati traveled through *La Belle Epoque* in a wake of orchids, inspiring masterpieces, causing suicides, planning extravagant "years of madness." Of Spain there is as little to be said as of Portugal. No one would have dreamed of going there except as a tourist. On the other hand,



Daisy Cornwallis West, Princess of Pless, Anonymous photograph. Daisy, princess of Pless, a true "Edwardian lady," married *the* richest German princeling. His family possessed the finest collection of pearls outside of the Russian court. Daisy is shown wearing seven yards—one strand—of pearls in this photograph. Daisy's brother, George Cornwallis West, was considered the handsomest man in Europe. He married Lady Randolph Churchill, the former Jenny Jerome, after her forty-fifth birthday, and she was later heard to remark to the duc de Gramont: "Where is my husband? I want to show him to you as I married him for his looks." Daisy, however, by no means lived in the shadow of her brother. She herself was known for being *very* outspoken and a highly original dresser.

thanks to a few madly Parisian noblemen, Bucharest was a citadel of elegance facing a fast-decomposing Orient. The India of the viceroys and the maharajahs also took part in the Edwardian fun. For Americans, London was the place to spend one's money and marry one's daughters.

Having placed *La Belle Epoque* in time—a period of fourteen years at the most—and on the map of Europe, we should now, if we are to understand its various aspects, ask ourselves who it was that benefited most from it; who, because of exceptional circumstances of culture and fortune, was able to instigate works of art, inspire a Proust or a D'Annunzio, applaud a Hugo von Hofmannsthal or a Diaghilev. As this period was the last still ruled by precedence, we shall begin with the royal families who benefited from it between assassination attempts, but who, for a long time now, had only inspired official painters, the librettists of operettas, and academicians. We can receive an idea of this separate world by looking at magazines that devoted so many pages to royal celebrations: coronations, jubilees, weddings, christenings, and funerals. Looking at the photographed groups surrounding a monarch, a connoisseur could recognize a Bourbon, a Hapsburg, or a Hanover by his Roman nose, protruding lips, or bulbous eyes. Most people copied the style and dress of King Edward and Queen Alexandra, but often, beneath their English veneer, their Germanic haughtiness or joviality, their Austrian foolishness, or their Russian neurasthenia was soon apparent. Royalty filled the sleeping cars. The Orient Express carried Fürstenburg and Hohenlohe to Vienna, Coburg to Sofia, and Danois to Athens. The North Star took Würtemberg and Hesse to St. Petersburg; Cannes and Marienbad, Venice and Biarritz were linked by special trains. Red carpets were cheerfully rolled out at railway stations, and the "august passengers" followed by ladies-in-waiting and aides-de-camp graciously received greetings. Their royal highnesses were always charming, but the Grand Duchess Vladimir was the most elegant, the empress of Germany the least fashionable, Queen Marie of Rumania the most beautiful, the king of Belgium's daughters the most unhappy, and the king of England's the most childish. The infantas were often flighty, whereas the Savoy princesses aspired to sainthood. As for the men, the Battenbergs were splendid but penniless, the Bourbons—both the Neapolitans and the Carlists—extremely pious, the Braganzas were gadabouts, and the Orléans very intelligent.

The visits rulers paid one another became the occasion for retinues, processions, fireworks, and festivities in which the whole population took part. We have lost this sense of occasion, which is one of the things dividing us from *La Belle Epoque.* The French Republic also knew how to receive guests; when Nicholas II, Edward VII, and Alfonso XIII came to Paris, the town was decked with flags, and thousands of onlookers waited for hours to cheer a king.

The arrival of a ruler, even if incognito, always caused a stir. The Comtesse Edmond de Pourtales and the Countess Greffulhe gave sumptuous and intimate lunches (only twenty guests) for Edward VII in Paris; for Don Carlos, king of Portugal, Count Boni de Castellane posted a footman on every step of his marble staircase. The arrival of a royal personage in a spa caused disturbances in hotels and casinos alike. With Edward VII always in the lead, Hamburg, Marienbad, Cannes, and Biarritz experienced brilliant seasons, and each time a Congress of Vienna in miniature gathered around the fat but well-dressed gentleman: highnesses, ambassadors, famous beauties waiting to be noticed or remembered, ladies ready to spend millions to be seen beside the king, like the famous Mrs. Moore, an American, of whom the king said: *"Il y a trois choses auxquelles on n'échappe pas: l'amour, la mort et la Moore."* ("There are three things from which one cannot escape: love, death, and Mrs. Moore.") In Biarritz the beautiful Mrs. Keppel kept guard over the king, and Mrs. Moore despaired of ever meeting him until the day she thought up the idea of giving the royal chauffeur an enormous tip. The large Mercedes broke down in the middle of an outing, and "by happy chance" the American, driving in the opposite direction in her De Dion-Bouton, offered to give the king a lift to Biarritz.

Gloomy under Victoria's reign, the English palaces became models not only for other courts but also for the houses of the millionaires whose company the king enjoyed so much. What Queen Marie of Rumania wrote about Windsor could almost equally well have been written after a visit to the duke of Marlborough at Blenheim Palace, to the duke of Westminster at Eaton Hall, or to the Rothschilds at Waddesdon or Ferrières:

"There is nothing more perfect down to the smallest detail than the Court of the King of England, a sort of aristocratic opulence where everything was easy with not the slightest false note and no time was wasted. From the handsome and splendidly dressed gentleman who welcomes you to the solemn yet affable footman who precedes you into the galleries, everything enchants even the most difficult of people."

Edward VII said to the keeper of his art collection: "I don't

La Revue Blanche, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Misia Sert, the wife of Thadée Natanson, co-director of *La Revue Blanche,* an art and literary review, is pictured in this poster by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Toulouse-Lautrec, the artist of the "low life" aspects of La Belle Epoque in France, was one of Misia's closest friends; in fact, he lived with the Natansons four days of every week during summers. Misia protected him and regarded him as the friend "chosen by my heart." He, in turn, painted the lively Misia in many guises, although this rendering of her on ice skates is one of the most famous.

know anything about pictures, but I know how they should be hung"—a remark typical of royalty, who, mostly, had their apartments arranged in a vaguely Louis XVI style, which became that of the Ritz Hotels. The damask walls were hung with portraits by Philip Alexis Lázló de Lombos, a Hungarian who was a genius at painting the sparkle of tiaras and medals.

Royal courts were naturally magnificent, the Kaiser's among others, with ceremony comparable to a grand military revue, but the court of Edward VII was elegant as well. Not even St. Petersburg could offer so many beauties or so many exotic costumes. Diamonds sparkled on the shoulders of peeresses and the turbans of maharajahs and gold on the uniforms of ambassadors and field marshals. The guests of honor opened the ball by dancing a quadrille or a polonaise with the sovereign; then, one on either side, preceded by chamberlains, the king and queen slowly made the tour of their guests and, as they passed, heads bowed like ears of corn in a wind. After this, the orchestra attacked a waltz or a Boston two-step. At midnight the royalties followed the king and queen to have supper in a more intimate dining room, and the guests moved into a gallery where a buffet was set out between pyramids of roses and exotic fruit, peacocks fanning out their tails, and boars' heads. Gold plate glittered on the sideboards, and people danced until dawn. Presentations of debutantes and Buckingham Palace garden parties were the occasions for enormous social upheaval and offered the crowd a sparkling—and free—spectacle. The toing and froing of impeccably harnessed carriages announced the royal presence in the streets. The court added a sparkle to every capital such as we can hardly imagine, and it was one of the many faults of Nicholas II to neglect St. Petersburg because the tsarina disliked parties. It is true that in poor countries, such as Portugal, the pomp and show of a court that had scarcely changed since the eighteenth century impelled the people toward anarchy.

As France had no court, the aristocracy took its place and, having no longer any political power, became purely representative because of its great fortunes in land. About ten families, intermarried and related to foreign royalty by marriage, supplied Marcel Proust with the originals for the Guermantes family. One need only reread *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* to realize that the life of the Guermantes, with their balls, grand lunches, and visits to one château after another, created a luxury movement that one could not help admiring even without being as snobbish as Proust. The carriages and horses, a magnificent outfit glimpsed in the street or in front of a house, a coming and going of superb footmen, plume-decked dowagers, or young officers with bird of prey-like profiles gave a party atmosphere to the Faubourg St. Germain, where the Guermantes lived, as well as to their village church or a concert that would otherwise have been very dreary. Proust saw very clearly that the Guermantes lived on familiar terms with ordinary people and were friendly with everyone as long as they did not try to force an entry; in short, they gave society an image of Beauty and a reminder of History. The same applied to the Italian aristocrats described by D'Annunzio in *Il Piacere,* and one needs only to see a Visconti film like *L'Innocente* to realize that a stylish aristocracy at least helped to make the world a little more amusing and much less ugly.

Did people really enjoy themselves when being entertained by the Guermantes or Roman princes or English dukes? One would hardly think so from reading the novels that take us into their drawing rooms; but writers, even when they were quite definitely guests, were still too much like spectators not to be severe critics of an allusive type of wit and expensive, monotonous pleasures. We need only call to mind some of the rules that dominated society to realize that so many constraints, even if they had the advantage of filling in people's long hours of leisure, would soon seem unbearable to us. One had to leave visiting cards, pay visits, attend all the weddings and funerals, be seen at horse shows, at the opera, at the races, at exhibitions, at charity bazaars, wearing a different outfit every time. Such a mechanical way of life caused what we would today call alienation in society people, a loss of individuality, turning them with the passing years into caricatures of themselves. Elegance and grotesqueness are never far away in Proust. Two typically Parisian artists, Helleu and Sem, precisely represented these two attributes. In a hundred sketches, Helleu, painter of yachts and young girls in bloom, captured the elegance of famous beauties such as the duchess of Marlborough and the Comtesse Greffulhe. They are goddesses raised above the masses on marble steps and surrounded by a court in which it is no easy task to distinguish the admirers from the parasites. The engravings show them reclining on a Louis XVI chaise longue, leaning on a parasol to inspect a Watteau drawing, their noses tucked into a muff or half hidden behind a fan. Ah, yes! It was indeed a *belle époque!*

Sem, who observed them without tenderness, depicted the famous beauty as the tired old woman she would become. As for women who had never been beautiful, he stresses the obscenity


La revue
blanche
bi-mensuelle
le nº 60 cent.
12 francs par An
1 rue Laffitte
Paris
Charpentier et Fasquelle, éditeurs
11, rue de Grenelle





Oscar Wilde, Anonymous photograph. On April 14, 1882, Leadville, Ohio, marked a red-letter day on its calendar, having witnessed one of the most astonishing eyefuls to come its way. Oscar Wilde, *above*, stepped off the train there and gave a reading from Benvenuto Cellini's *Autobiography*. Afterward, he remarked that the Leadville miners, in their red shirts, high boots, and corduroy trousers, were "the only well-dressed men I have seen in America."

Robert, Comte de Montesquiou-Fesenzac, Giovanni Boldini. Robert, comte de Montesquiou-Fesenzac, aesthete extraordinaire, occupied one of the most prominent positions in Parisian society. He worshiped the exquisite, and in its name he meted out admonishments to all, both verbally and through a sizable literary production. His own taste was questionable, which made him a slightly ridiculous figure in some circles. Montesquiou died railing against those that would not be swayed by his many dicta.

Gabriele d'Annunzio, Anonymous photograph. Famous for his diverse accomplishments, Gabriele d'Annunzio was a poet, writer, politician, and sportsman. Heavily in debt and one of the most curious and exalted personalities of La Belle Epoque, he immersed himself writing novels, plays, stories, and mysteries in both Italian and French, and in time he was hailed as the best writer in each language. D'Annunzio was an unbalanced and confused genius, but Parisian society fought for his favor and Italians regarded him as their personal hero.

Countess Greffulhe, Nadar. An intimate of Robert, comte de Montesquiou-Fesenzac, an inspiration to Proust, and a woman of true grace, Countess Greffulhe is seen here in a famous gown decorated with lilies, made for her by Worth. Montesquiou wrote about her: "Beautiful lily who looks through your black pistil." Elizabeth Greffulhe answered him: "I have only been understood by you ... and the sun!" Montesquiou responded: "I was happy that she put me first."





Consuelo, Duchess of Marlborough, 1877–1964, with her son, Lord Ivor Spencer-Churchill, Giovanni Boldini. The Anglo-American marriage of convenience had become a fixture of society when Consuelo, the shy and lovely eighteen-year-old daughter of the fabulously wealthy William K. Vanderbilt, was forced into marriage with the ninth duke of Marlborough by a mother whose social ambitions far exceeded those of her children. Consuelo found it impossible to suppress her American traits and eventually divorced her husband to become an active figure in women's rights.

of a mouth, the avariciousness of a glance. The marquise de Villeparisis and the marquise de Ste. Euverte, whose feather headdresses, trains, and makeup-plastered faces Proust describes so amusingly, are found again in Sem's drawings, wild with the vanities of this world, beside shifty-eyed gentlemen, seedy gigolos, and monolithic grand dukes. A *belle époque,* was it? One wonders as one leafs through Sem's albums of drawings.

When overwhelmed with nostalgia for *La Belle Epoque*, one should read the memoirs of those who lived through it with all its advantages. Two women have left particularly delightful ones: the duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre in *Au Temps des Marronniers en Fleurs (When the Chestnuts Were in Flower),* and the comtesse de Pange in *J'ai vécu 1900 (I Lived in 1900).* In their pages the world of Proust lives again, a happy mixture of worldliness and intelligence. In spite of the conventions of the time, a woman of spirit could easily make an interesting life for herself if she did not waste too much time visiting, attending fittings at her dressmaker's, or engaging in love affairs. With a little intrigue, a good table, and plenty of wit, she could manage to run a salon, a typically Parisian institution and one possible only in a leisured society. There were as many originals for Proust's Mme. Verdurin as there were for his duchesse de Guermantes. Examples were Mme. Armand de Caillavet, who exhibited Anatole France as if he were an unusual animal, Mme. de Loynes, in whose salon right-wing policies were forged, and Mme. Menard-Dorian, at whose house (in spite of the fact that she was a millionaire) left-wing policies were hatched. There were musical salons, artistic salons (the least smart). Each had its own Academician and fought to obtain the election to the Académie Française (which has a maximum of forty eminent members elected for life) of other members of the faithful. These ladies had their "days" when almost everyone they knew came to call between five o'clock and seven; then they gave grand dinners, leading the conversation like a conductor, their musicians taking care not to miss a single word uttered by the "resident" great man. The lady of the house had frequently captured him by means of love, and she retained him with good cuisine and by arranging a sort of court around him. We have no idea today of the degree of importance that could be attained by a writer such as Paul Bourget or Pierre Loti. When D'Annunzio came to Paris, delirium ensued. André Gide, who loathed these dramas and intrigues, is not a *Belle Epoque* writer.

These ladies also had to fill their homes with old furniture and knickknacks. The *Belle Epoque* of "decent people" on the whole (except in Belgium and Germany) turned its back on contemporary art, hoping to hide its defects under the cast-off clothing of more gallant or glorious days. When Boni de Castellane built a palace with his wife's dollars, he had a copy of the Grand Trianon made. In this taste for the past and this refusal to live in the present can be seen a society nearing its end.

Where French memoir writers were impregnated with literature, English ladies—far more numerous but less witty, with the exception of Margot Asquith—were almost equally preoccupied with politics as with society. Their sphere was more likely to be a country house than a salon. In the country they had ministers and deputies, dukes and bankers, ambassadors and journalists in their hands. A few beauties warmed these gatherings with their presence. Sport occupied a more important place than conversation unless one belonged to the kindom of the "souls," a group of cultured aristocrats who professed scorn for the rather vulgar luxury of the Edwardians. In 1906, Lady Londonderry succeeded in breaking the alliance between the Conservatives and the Liberals through her hatred of Lloyd George; the old duchess of Devonshire had pushed her husband into all the ministries in spite of his indolence; and Margot Asquith managed to make hers prime minister.

Enormous fortunes made it possible to maintain two country houses, a house in London, a shoot in Scotland, a villa in Cannes, a yacht, and a racing stable. Lord Tredegar and Lord Bute between them owned almost all the coal in Wales. Already very rich, Lord Derby inherited £300,000 from an uncle on condition that he distribute £67,000 among the 763 servants, stablemen, and gardeners. If the Guermantes had a humorous insolence, their British equivalents were in such a majestic position that they would never have had the opportunity of using that kind of wit. The duchess of Devonshire offered either one or two fingers to the ladies who visited her when shaking hands, according to their rank or virtue, rarely her whole hand. In her palace on the Mall the duchess of Sutherland received her guests in three stages: first, a dinner given for the king and a few dukes and ambassadors; then about a hundred friends came for coffee; lastly, at about eleven o'clock, came the "crush," that is, "everyone who was anyone." Woe betide anyone who arrived too early!

It was a lavish society, nonintellectual, but containing many beautiful women. Sargent's famous painting of the Wyndham sisters, a symphony in white, is the perfect image of the Edwardian style, just as his portrait of Lord Ribblesdale is an example of





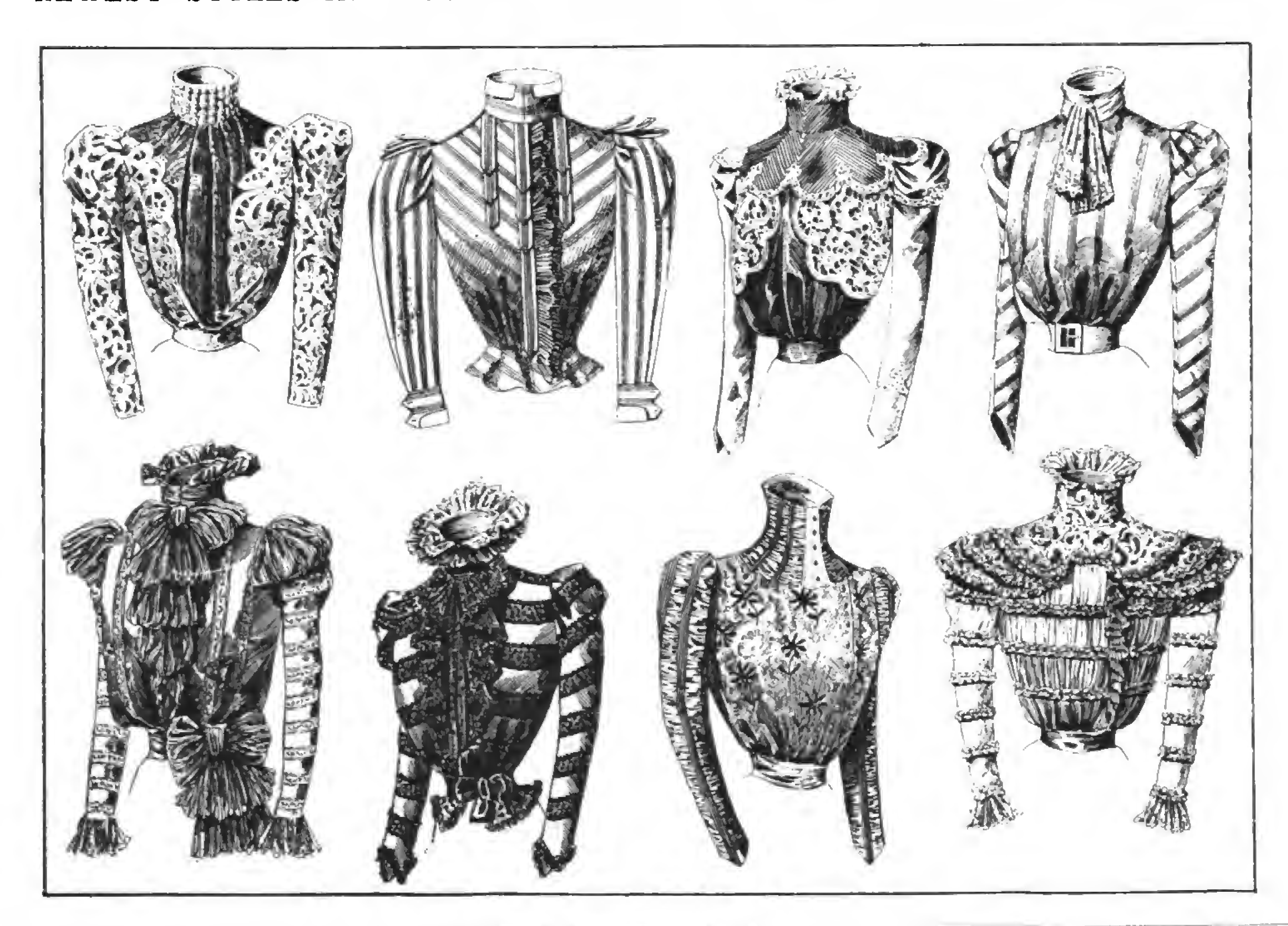
NOVELTIES IN SHOES AND SHOE BUCKLES. (For description see page 2.)

perfect elegance not without a certain ease and grace. The women of the world whose photographs appeared in tobacco kiosk windows were known as "professional beauties"; some of them, like Lillie Langtry, were on the fringes of the *demi-monde.* Lady Randolph Churchill had many affairs but without the slightest scandal. The model for these ladies was the honored Mrs. Keppel, as clever as she was beautiful; she managed to occupy first place in the king's heart as well as in society. Princess Daisy of Pless, equally intimate with the king and the kaiser, dreamed of an Anglo-German rapprochement. She left memoirs that endlessly describe parties and palaces, a delight for lovers of past glories. Two words consistently recur in them: "lavish" and "pageant."

Edwardian society was in fact a prodigious procession with which the newspapers kept their readers in touch hourly. One is amazed, leafing through the newspapers of the day, at the amount of space occupied by society events. The public followed these reports with as much interest as fans have today in their favorite stars.

Accounts of weekends at Chatsworth, the duke of Devonshire's house, filled whole pages. It is true that there were good reasons for this. Fifty guests arrived, each with his valet or her lady's maid; the duke himself had over two hundred servants. These "upper servants" were served in a separate dining room seated in exactly the same order of precedence as their masters; amongst themselves they called one another by the same titles as the people they served. The party arrived by special train with two extra wagons for the vast amounts of luggage. It seems that much of the time was spent changing one's clothes. From breakfast on, one wore country clothes, then lunch was eaten round small tables, with the ladies who were not going hunting that afternoon in town clothes. After the hunt came tea. If the king was present, a lobster salad was served, the gentlemen in morning coats, the ladies in tea gowns. Then bridge was played until it was time to change into evening dress for dinner—a different dress each evening, of course, and the gentlemen in knee breeches or uniform. Theater occupied the evening with singers from London, unless there was a ball. At midnight a cold buffet was served: plovers' eggs, grouse, salmon. The king was very difficult to entertain. One day, having been invited to visit the pretty Mrs.

NEWEST STYLES IN BLOUSES BY SOME OF THE LEADING DRESSMAKERS.



James, he found an enormous Easter egg on the step, out of which his hostess jumped dressed as a chick. He gave her Victoria's look when she uttered her famous "We are not amused."

The best witness of Edwardian ostentation was Vita Sackville-West, a very young girl, whose father owned the fabulous Knole Castle. Her novel *The Edwardians* is as pitiless an account as that of the Guermantes but lacks the esthetic sparkle that enabled Proust to give his duchess a place among the great figures of literature.

The author's mother, Lady Sackville, was the leading figure of a shocking trial from which, thanks to her beauty and insolence, she emerged with her head high. A rich old gentleman who had inherited all the millions of Sir Richard Wallace (of Wallace Collection fame) was in love with Lady Sackville. He left her a fortune and his fabulous furniture. The old gentleman's family went to court to try to recover their inheritance, but lost the case because they could not prove that Lady Sackville had been the mistress of Sir Murray Scott. Lady Sackville was a great admirer of Rodin, who sculpted a beautiful bust of her.

Generally speaking, in such a well-organized society the scan-

On January 7, 1900, the Paris edition of the New York *Herald*, which had been founded in 1887 by a rich American, James Gordon Bennett, published the first of its weekly fashion supplements, dedicated to instructing ladies and gentlemen in the niceties of style and fashion. *Above left*, the newest fashions in shoes and shoe buckles are shown in a typical illustration, and, *above*, stylish blouses decorated with lace, embroidery, and bows.

Overleaf: *The Festival of Roses "Corso" at Neuilly*, Les Frères Seeberger. Every year, in the spring, the French celebrated a "festival of roses." Originating in Corsica, and moving to the south of France, the festival became a national fête. In this photograph by one of the Seeberger brothers, two celebrants showered with rose petals are being driven by an impeccable coachman in their open carriage, which is sumptuously decorated with roses. The festival was held for the benefit of widows and orphans of soldiers who had so gallantly defended France in her seemingly unending conflicts.





FASHION SUPPLEMENT.
THE NEW YORK HERALD.
PARIS, SUNDAY, JUNE 26, 1910.



LES TRIBUNES A LONGCHAMPS ❊ THE STANDS AT LONGCHAMPS.
By L. SABATTIER

Les Tribunes à Longchamps, L. Sabattier. People did not simply "go to the races" in La Belle Epoque. It was a ritual and an event that had a significance that today has become obsolete. Houses were taken, and seasons, balls, suppers, luncheons, and clubs revolved around the turf. Newmarket, Longchamps, Ascot, the Derby, and the Jockey Club all reflected the glory of the horse. When the king and his wealthy subjects ran their horses, the world came dressed for the event. Fashions were designed and worn for opening days when the crowds paid as much attention to society figures as to the thoroughbreds.

dals did not reach the public at large but produced situations that, after Oscar Wilde, dramatists such as Somerset Maugham and Arthur Wing Pinero made the most of. One of the most famous stories is that of the rivalry between Lady Grey, a great beauty who launched the Ballets Russes in Paris, and Lady Londonderry. Both were in love with a very handsome man, Harry Cust, who left several descendants among the great families. Lady Grey had Lady Londonderry's letters to Harry Cust stolen from his desk, and sent them to Lady Londonderry's husband. He read the first, gave the packet to his wife, and said, "From today on I shall never speak to you again." And, putting up an impeccable front in public and continuing to receive, the couple lived as strangers in their Park Lane house and their Irish castle.

Blackmail was the worst danger facing these privileged existences. The indiscretion of a rival, the revenge of a servant, or the schemes of society people in need could, with the threat of scandal, if not ruin, at least poison these people, who were well known to the general public and respected by them, because their photographs had appeared hundreds of times in magazines like the *Tatler* and *Vanity Fair.*

The aristocracy, because of its attachment to the land, remained much more nationalist than royalty. Another international class should now be considered whose alliance with the aristocracy had happy results, esthetically at least.

International high finance served as a link between London, Paris, Vienna, and, to a lesser extent, Berlin and Rome. The Rothschilds, with relations in the great capitals, were the most famous example of an environment whose splendor added to the brilliance of *La Belle Epoque.* There were the Cahen of Antwerp, the Deutsch de la Meurthes and the Foulds in Paris, the Bleichroders in Berlin, and in Vienna so many bankers whose wives posed for Klimt. In London the king imposed two financiers on a society that was not, however, much impressed by wealth. They were Baron de Hirsch and Sir Ernest Cassel. The latter built himself a Carrara marble palace in Park Lane. His granddaughter married Lord Mountbatten, a great-nephew of the king's. The prime minister, Lord Rosebery, had married a Rothschild. Even if they did not enjoy it at all, bankers, wishing to become part of Europe's most brilliant aristocracy, kept racing stables and went fox hunting. They also became collectors to furnish their homes. Sargent painted them, dark and powerful against a damask background, and their wives like Peach Melbas—an Edwardian invention—heavy with roses on creamy cushions. In Paris, Sem sketched Semitic profiles at the races or at Deauville, inhaling the air rich with worldly promise, and Proust chose a Jew, Charles Haas, for the most elegant man in his great work, Swann.

Immense fortunes were then at the disposal of women for whom beauty and elegance were one. The most intelligent of them bought paintings, gave marvellous parties, made a success of an opera or a couturier. Boldini painted them playing with their long strings of pearls. Baron de Meyer photographed them in shades of grey reminiscent of Whistler. The most marvellous and the most extravagant was the Marchesa Casati, daughter of a Milanese banker, "the only woman who has ever surprised me," said D'Annunzio, who drew this portrait of her in *Forse che sì, forse che no:*

"She also enjoyed enhancing the freshness of her twenty-five years with red and black; her eyelids were always in mourning around their bright irises, and sometimes she blooded her mouth with vermillion. But her alchemy was much more intricate and produced yet greater wonders. What magic did she use to transmute the matter of her life into charms of such touching power? Some of her facial expressions condensed the poetry of a garden, a tragedy, a fable. Some ordinary, everyday action—slowly removing a glove, sliding the kid over the light down of her arm; sitting on her bed, taking off a long silk stocking as delicate as a flower that fades in an instant; removing the pins from a hat, lifting her arms in an arc and letting her sleeve flow down her arm to the curled gold of her armpit." Never has anyone written better about women.

The extravagances of La Casati continued into the "mad years," whose fashions she had foreseen. Others, like the Princesse Edmond de Polignac, *née* Singer, of sewing-machine fame, served Beauty by ordering the composition of ballets or sonatas by Ravel, Fauré, Falla, Stravinsky, while her brother gave Isadora Duncan the money she needed to open her schools of dancing. A very musical Polish woman, Misia Gobedska, having married the founder of *La Revue Blanche* and been a visitor to Mallarmé and Vuillard, married the proprietor of a great newspaper whose millions she merrily spent helping artists, Diaghilev in particular.

The Ballets Russes owed *La Belle Epoque* a success in which estheticism and snobbery held equal shares. It was supported by those whom capitalist society considered most intelligent, and yet it was too modern, too different from the usual taste of the rich to be thought of as a product of the period. Quite the contrary, the time seems affected, pompous, or tasteless compared

Edward VII and Members of the Royal Family, Anonymous photograph. Edward VII and his lovely queen, Alexandra, set the pace during La Belle Epoque in England. Dazzling, splendid heir to the throne of Great Britain and then king, Edward broke the spell cast by his mother, Victoria, and set England to dancing, drinking, and playing with a thoroughness that was indulgently tolerated by his adoring subjects. He perfected the art of "living life," and he endured many scandals with the same dignity as he endured the monarchy. Although Edward had many mistresses and many illegitimate children, he was a warm and loving husband. This portrait reflects those qualities without denying the dash and style of his personality.



with Diaghilev's brilliant creations. Beside the Russian composers, the Mascagnis, Leoncavallos, and Massenets seemed very insipid; compared with the tutu-clad ballerinas so dear to opera lovers, Tamara Karsavina or Ida Rubinstein, enturbanned, almost naked under their gold veils, were like the clash of cymbals in a serenade. The stars of that euphoric world were much more the great opera singers like Nellie Melba and Mary Garden. *Bel canto* suited their imposing presence; they appeared at the Ritz as if on the stage of the opera house. An Edwardian expression to describe the way these women made their entrance at a ball or a theater in their plumed headdresses was "They sailed in." They lived, as the French would have said, "in full sail."

The only port in which these fair vessels would consent to stay for longer than one season was Venice, capital of estheticism, in an aristocratic milieu maintained by capitalism and brought back into fashion by D'Annunzio, about which Proust wrote some famous pages.

One is forced always to come back to Proust when discussing this era to which he gave so much prestige. When he has finished showing us the almost regal way of life of the Guermantes and the elegance of Swann, we can follow him into the milieu of the wealthy bourgeoisie, his own, that of Mme. Verdurin and Dr. Cottard. For anyone who did not know the so-called *Belle Epoque,* the most difficult thing to grasp is the number and importance of servants; without them, Proust's society could not have existed. The Prousts kept a butler, a cook assisted by a kitchen maid, and a lady's maid. Once a week a man came in to polish the floors, and a young man did the errands. This was the minimum for the proper maintenance of a vast apartment. The upper middle class added to this list a coachman and a laundress. This small world led a life reflecting that of its masters, dependent but lacking in privacy and often loathsome. The intrigues were similar to those of the drawing room and linked houses from kitchen to kitchen. The children, whose mothers were busy with "social obligations"—there was nothing funny about the juxtaposition of these two words fifty years ago—lived much of the time with the servants. Thanks to their nannies they had some idea of country life. Familiar lady's maids and brazen valets very often taught them "the facts of life."

The circle of acquaintance had to be wide, as the time-honored expression was, and this was not so much an expression of snobbery as an insurance against "reversals of fortune," a tribal interaid system. "Decent people" knew that somebody's uncle, a councillor of state, someone else's brother-in-law, a banker, or yet another person's nephew, the heir to an important legal practice, could one day help a husband or marry a daughter, and they paid visits and gave dinners to consolidate links with these connections and to create a milieu.

In order to lead this social life one had to have a complete accounting system as well as a large apartment and a well-organized staff. Our grandmothers' and great-grandmothers' address books were strongly bound volumes. Acquaintances were listed in three orders: first, alphabetical; second, by days: Mme. Cottard on Tuesdays, Mme. Legrand on the first Thursday. Some were extremely complicated, such as Mme. Ganderax, the wife of the proprietor of the *Revue de Paris,* who was at home to visitors at four o'clock on the first Thursday in every month and every Friday except the first. Thirdly and lastly, the names were listed by streets; thus, without wasting time, one could "do" all the Mondays in the Rue de la Bienfaisance, all the Tuesdays in the

Avenue de Messine, and so on. The salon directories, the real *Almanachs de Gotha* of that society, gave details of changes in families, addresses, and "at home" days. Every day the *Figaro* and the *Gaulois* devoted a whole page to social events, and aspirants for membership to society carefully scanned the lists of people seen at teas, young ladies' dances, or funerals. Mothers were fascinated by lists of wedding presents: Mme. Jacquemart-André, a britannia-metal teapot, the Baronne de Salomon de Rothschild, a pair of Louis XV sugar tongs; young girls devoured descriptions of fashions: Mlle. Lucie Félix Faure in a puff of lilac tulle, the Baronne Hottinguer in a black-on-black visiting gown trimmed with black.

The elements most determined to enjoy themselves among this rich bourgeoisie found in Paris, much more easily than in other capitals, aristocrats bored by the conventions of their environment. And so we come to the *demi-monde,* to the world of the theater, which with official painters, actors, clubmen, and the upper middle class made up that famous *Tout Paris. Tout Paris* ate at restaurants, launched Maxim's, went driving in the Bois de Boulogne in the first motorcars, decided the success or the failure of a play. In several novels Jean Lorrain, whose pen was as cruel as Sem's pencil, describes a grand first night at which the plumed and painted guests with their servile or avaricious expressions are reminiscent of a sequence from a Fellini film. An author of light comedies, more kindly disposed than Lorrain, draws a pretty picture of Parisian restaurants:

"Paris prepares for dinner... out of doors. And at Laurent's, in front of the bourgeois Le Doyen, around the Folie-Paillard, through the bushes glows the green light of the lamp shades. In the candlelight the tablecloths are as white as sheets. From a distance, when the people make to sit at table, they look as if they were about to start reading in bed.

"This is the moment when the Champs Elysées, from the Place de la Concorde to the Etoile, and especially around the Rond-Point, gradually awakens to a night life quite different from that of the daytime. Alone, near the calm upper part of the avenue of which one can make out neither the beginning nor the end, the Palace draws a double row of strollers toward its illumined windows, their eyes filled with ecstasy or loathing. Behind the windows, two steps away, one can see foreigners sitting as clearly as if they were outside, still rich, eating to the sound of the czardas snatched specially for them from the hearts of violins and zithers by gypsies with walrus mustaches and aubergine cheeks, their languorously lustful eyes rolling toward the shoulder of an American woman flowing with pearls; one can see the valets in their knee breeches, the haughty attitude of the butlers, hands weighed down with rings tremblingly raising an overfilled glass of champagne, the smell of gutted poultry stuffed with a wealth of truffles, sheaves of roses, the block of ice illuminated from within like the thick glass of a lighthouse lantern, and the teeth of the beautiful girl in the act of preparing a flower for a buttonhole." (Henri Lavedan)

The *demi-mondaines* loved making theatrical entrances into these restaurants, and especially into Maxim's at suppertime, in very light colored dresses standing out clearly from the dark suits of their admirers massed behind them and over whom they towered with their plumed hats or lofty sprays of feathers. If every head did not turn on recognizing her flourishing soprano laugh, her entrance had failed.

The same performance could be seen in the Bois de Boulogne in spring. Let us turn again to Jean Lorrain:

"Half past twelve. Pavillon d'Armenonville. It is cool, the lighting is soft, dimmed by great, deep shadows, a scene of refined elegance, the height of luxury; the gleam of silver and glass through the plate-glass windows of the veranda, the shadowy green of the leaves reflected in the pale-blue lacquered tables, and among the snorting of horses, the clanking of bits and curb chains, the grinding of wheels and the flash of harness, one can observe hand shakes, charming laughter, desultory conversation, 'good mornings' said for the pleasure of showing the teeth and holding out a delicate little hand laden with rings, a toing and froing of bright dresses and supple waists sheathed in embroidery beneath unexpectedly twirling parasols."

The delightful theater in Monte Carlo was one of the places where these ladies, who would not have had a box at the Paris Opéra, displayed their jewelry. During one particular season the public was thrilled by the rivalry between the beautiful Otéro and Liane de Pougy. If one evening Otéro brought out her rubies, Liane would sport even bigger ones the following day. If Otéro's pearls reached to her waist, Liane could make a belt out of hers. Finally, it became known that Otéro had been given a diamond rivière beside which Liane's diamonds would pale into insignificance. However, Liane appeared in her box dressed all in white without a single jewel. Behind her came her lady's maid covered in diamonds easily worth the same as Otéro's.

Liane de Pougy was by far the more elegant and the more intel-

Cléo de Mérode, Giovanni Boldini. The duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre recalls Boldini: "Boldini was splashing his canvas with the point of a virtuoso brush and putting deliberate black splashes which seemed to have been thrown by angry cuttle-fish. Boldini's clients were mainly concerned with their own portraits, but the marquis de Brion, a real connoisseur, was buying out those little genre-portraits where Boldini was at his best. . . . " This portrait and the one on page 21 are vivid in their portrayal of La Belle Epoque ladies. Here Cléo de Mérode, an exquisite dancer of the Folies Bergères and mistress of Leopold of Belgium, shows off her magnificent beauty; she earned an unprecedented sum of 40,000 francs a month as a dancer and many times that from her wealthy lovers.

ligent of these two famous courtesans, who attracted so many people to Paris and whose names, infinitely better known than those of Pasteur and Degas, inspired the dreams of gentlemen from Caracas to Vladivostok. Liane was entertained simultaneously by distinguished foreigners, Baron Bleichroder in Berlin, Lord Carnarvon in London, Prince Strozzi in Florence, and in Paris (among others) the young Maurice de Rothschild. The brother of the king of Portugal spent fortunes on her. But she preferred women, and had a stormy relationship with a young American, Nathalie Barney. Jean Lorrain, who himself preferred men, nearly married Liane de Pougy. He described her as follows:

"Taller, slenderer, more refined than ever, with that transparent complexion and those bluish circles round her great frightened doe-eyes, Liane receives her visitors today reclining on a snowdrift of white furs thrown over her famous white satin chaise longue. She wears a sumptuous dress with overfull sleeves of white brocade, the material and the lining patterned with lilies. Six rows of pearls encircle her fragile neck, one of those pretty necks destined for the executioner's ax and, amid all the furry whiteness, the glassy satin and the orient pearls, she looks like a sickly, delicate Infanta."

To amuse her girl friend, Liane gave strange parties to which she invited suspicious-looking wrestlers and at which she served strawberries in champagne and ether. To round off the evening, they went to nightclubs in Montmartre to dance with artists and ruffians and sometimes stayed until dawn if a famous murderer was being guillotined in the La Roquette prison yard. Such sights provided a new thrill for these ladies and their companions. A *belle époque*?

Never has prostitution been so well organized or offered so many variations as in the Paris of 1900. From the great courtesans who could be seen driving down the Champs Elysées lolling back on the seats of their carriages to the bareheaded girls in shawls who strolled the outer boulevards, there was something to suit all tastes and every purse. The "demicastors" were middle-class women who, through go-betweens, found gentlemen only too willing to buy them dresses and jewelry. These gentlemen were old reprobates or, if they liked extreme youth, "nice, clean old gentlemen." This is the world Colette depicted in *Gigi.* It was Georges Feydeau's source of many of the characters in his comedies—the "creatures" discovered in their corsets hiding under a bed, who turn up in a ball gown at a small family reunion, who are pursued with much shrieking and yelling down sleeping-car corridors. Nice girls at heart, and preferable to the permanently cantankerous, avaricious, and stupid wives accompanied by formidable mothers.

The Feydeau farce atmosphere reappears even in the most shady affairs. The pretty Mme. Stenheil, in whose arms ten years before President Félix Faure had expired, was accused of murdering her mother and her husband with the complicity of her valet. A complicated setting, contradictory witnesses, magistrates determined to find out as little as possible, all led to an acquittal that shocked "decent people." And, Parisian to her fingertips, Mme. Stenheil lost no time in marrying a Scottish lord.

A stranger arriving in Paris had only to take a few steps on the Boulevard des Italiens to be accosted by plumed prostitutes or more subtly inveigled by correct-looking people. If he suspected some sort of trap (and not without reason), he would go to the famous brothels. The Chabanais, started by the Prince of Wales and still visited by him as King Edward VII, was extremely luxurious with its Gothic and Arabian rooms and its sleeping car. The ladies received their customers in evening dresses. In the less classy establishments they wore dressing gowns, as painted by Toulouse-Lautrec. Then there were the frankly popular houses in which the women were virtually prisoners. The traffic in girls developed and became highly organized; the "white slave trade" sent large numbers of unfortunate girls mainly to South America. In *La Maison Philibert,* Jean Lorrain paints the portraits of "these ladies in a provincial brothel."

Venereal disease cast a shadow over this *Belle Epoque,* which sometimes appears to have been irrigated by a bidet. One need only read the pages of advertisements in magazines such as *Le Rire* or *La Vie Parisienne* to realize that the promises of amazing cures were usually only booby traps. To receive a true impression of a period, the small advertisements in a paper are much more useful than articles aimed at giving the reader a rosy view of life. Better than the "glamorous" photographs, for example, provided for all tastes. Those available to us now in the form of postcards generally provoke laughter because the decor and accessories are an ill match for the beautiful girls posing with such lack of conviction.

Lesbian scenes abounded. Pierre Louÿs had just published the *Chansons de Bilitis,* and much was done in the name of Antiquity. And yet when, seminaked, Colette danced a sort of Sapphic dance based on a scenario by her friend the Marquise de Belboeuf, she caused a scandal mainly because her protectress was the daugh-




JANE
Avril
H.Stern, Paris.
1899

Jane Avril, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. This poster of a cancan dancer from the Moulin Rouge, Jane Avril, is the next-to-last one made by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Jane and Toulouse-Lautrec enjoyed a special friendship, spending many evenings together. These two unique and curious personalities were stifled and molded by the period in which they lived. Jane had a great interest in Toulouse-Lautrec's work and was a frequent model. She liked this poster very much; unfortunately, her impresario refused it, and it was never shown. Today it is regarded as one of Toulouse-Lautrec's finest and most reflective works in this medium.

ter of the duc de Morny. A vast fortune usually enabled one to surmount the most difficult situations. A millionaire baroness, so fat that she was nicknamed *La Brioche,* entertained a young poetess, Renée Vivien, and kept her prisoner in a huge apartment full of Oriental *objects d'art* where boredom induced her to take drugs. Another American woman, young and beautiful this time, Nathalie Barney, was also in love with Renée Vivien but could not communicate with her. So she paid an enormous fee to the singer Emma Calvé to disguise herself as one of the street singers of whom there were so many in Paris, just like the "German bands" in London and the Neapolitan "musicos" who overran Italy. Only, instead of singing a popular song, Emma Calvé sang the great aria from *Carmen*. The whole street ran to its windows, Renée recognized Nathalie standing on the pavement and realized that she was still loved. Alas, the opium and the baronne's champagne did not go well together, and Renée Vivien died very young in circumstances never properly explained.

Whereas Lesbos was treated with amused indulgence, Sodom was frowned upon. For the benefit of Anglo-Saxon tourists visiting Taormina, the Baron de Gloeden introduced young Sicilians of dubious purity disguised as Virgilian shepherd boys. Even in the heart of Paris, Jean Lorrain, Proust, and their model, the Comte Robert de Montesquiou, had to make a show of having female attachments. There was only one homosexual scandal in France, that of the young Comte d'Adelsward de Fersen, a member of the best Protestant society. He celebrated "pink masses" in his apartment in the Plaine Monceau and exiled himself to Capri. There he met again one of the directors of the Krupp armaments firm, who shortly afterward committed suicide. In fact, what happened was that people committed suicide when threatened with a scandal or simply on becoming aware of tastes that were called "unnatural." A young man, appalled by his proclivities, went to ask the Abbé Mugnier, a great friend of Proust's and one of his models, whether he should enter Holy Orders or join the Foreign Legion, as his religion debarred him from committing suicide. The drawing-room chaplain gave him this wise advice: "Continue with your life, and try not to do anything definite in either direction."

Proust clearly depicted the part played by obliging servants or go-betweens. It was the same in all aristocratic societies, but in England convention refused to allow women to know that such things could exist. Thus, when Lord Henry Somerset's wife began telling everyone that she had surprised her husband in the arms of a footman, doors closed on her and her husband retired to Florence.

Germany experienced scandals poisoned by the left-wing press to discredit the emperor. The endless trial of Prince Eulenburg from 1907 to 1909 was the more regrettable in that the facts denigrated Wilhelm II's most sensible councillor. Shortly afterward the head of the emperor's Military Household danced in a tutu before his master, who wept with laughter at the sight. Either the effort or the success was too much for the general, who died of an embolism. It was only with the greatest difficulty that they managed to get him back into a uniform. Then two young Hohenzollern princes were caught in a similar scandal to the great delight of the press: "Really, Willy is too clumsy," sighed Edward VII. In England, in fact, scandal never touched a member of the royal family. In Vienna a few years earlier the emperor's brother, the Archduke Ludwig-Victor, nicknamed Luzi-Wurzi, was compromised by the masseur at a Turkish bath. And has not too much been said about the friendship of the empress for an *haute-école equestrienne*? In France, without scandal but not without roars of laughter, the Rumanian actor De Max personified transvestism. He took himself for Sarah Bernhardt and, covered in jewels and dragging yards of velvet, he acted the parts of Bas-Empire princes. He presented transvestite and literary productions in the little theaters of Montmartre at which Jean Cocteau recited his first poems.

Tout Paris pursued the amorous low life in Montmartre at the Moulin Rouge, then at the Bal Tabarin or the Casino de Paris. The Montmartre myth dates from the last decade of the century. The fact that the church of the Sacré-Coeur crowned this hill consecrated to the pleasures of the flesh gave it a very decadent ambiguity. Singers, somewhat anarchistic, rather mystical, usually smutty, made the most of what the English referred to in French as *la nostalgie de la boue.* This time, so self-confident, so wealthy, had a weakness for representations of poverty. Just as people liked to hang on their drawing-room wall a painting—in a nicely gilded frame—representing beggar children, so they liked listening—while eating oysters—to singers such as Bruant or Jehan Rictus singing about tramps, prostitutes, convicts, or drunkards whose presence could be sensed in the shadows as one left the Cabaret du Chat Noir, dark and disturbing as in Théophile Alexandre Steinlen's lithographs. This longing for the low life had been the making of La Goulue, so often painted by Toulouse-Lautrec, and who inspired so many imitators through-



Lillie Langtry, Anonymous photograph. Emilie Le Breton, known as the Jersey Lily, married Edward Langtry in order to escape from the provincial island of Jersey. She stepped into the scintillating world of the Prince of Wales and promptly became one of the age's "professional beauties." Oscar Wilde wore lilies in his lapel to honor her, and she was one of the more enduring of Edward's mistresses. In 1881 Lillie made her first professional stage appearance and was quickly recognized as an actress of merit—a reputation she maintained for another twenty years.

out the *Belle Epoque.*

" 'Huh! Haven't you got wives at home?' Jostling the mob of idlers, flashy adventurers, and provincials out on a spree who crowd around her as she tries to pass, La Goulue, fat, white, moulded into her little black dress, pushes impassively through the crowd, her hand on the shoulder of La Môme Fromage, insolently surveying all these rutting males with the look of a beautiful, self-confident girl who has experienced every degradation. The setting: the Elysée Gardens, the mirrors of the Moulin Rouge, or the brilliantly lit Jablockhof in the Jardin de Paris. La Goulue! Bursting from her abundant clusters of petticoats in a rustle of lace and expensive underwear, heightened here and there by soft-colored ribbons, a leg appears, pointing straight at the chandelier, shining and silky, gripped above the knee by a diamond buckle; the leg flutters about, joyous and witty, lascivious and teasing with its mobile, dislocated foot, miming what look like greetings to the oglers crowding round. La Goulue is the star of the dance halls, those gigantic meeting places for bored men and prostitutes, the star of Montmartre rising in the moonlight of the Pierrot de Willette above the mound of the Sacré-Coeur and the ghostly sails of dead windmills, a cynical glory made of fancy and filth, a flower in a lavatory pan caught in a ray of electric light and suddenly made all the rage." (Jean Lorrain)

Even today, the French cancan is still an absurd and solemn rite, now devoid of any eroticism, practiced every night in the music halls of Montmartre for an audience of foreigners attracted by a spectacle described as *Belle Epoque,* one of the few French expressions they understand.

This somewhat sordid *Belle Epoque* of Montmartre has nonetheless left us some pleasant memories, thanks to some of Colette's writings, Leautaud's *Petit Ami,* and Francis Carco's *Jésus la Caille.* We still sing Yvette Guilbert's songs, we still admire the posters of Jules Chéret, which, after Lautrec, and more cheerfully, covered the walls with frenzied pictures to the glory of some ephemeral star, some aperitif, or some remedy. In about 1910 the great painter Bonnard was inspired by this atmosphere of pleasure that lit up the evenings around the Place Pigalle. By the light of electric signs and the headlights of cars, revellers went from one nightclub to another. (Girls painted by Kees Van Dongen, naked in black stockings, their eyes made up in green.) But Picasso and Modigliani, who were also then painting in Montmartre, were in no way a part of the *Belle Epoque.*

The world of pleasure was less well organized, less socially stratified in the other capitals. In London, the *nostalgie de la boue* led to the worst kind of trouble: blackmail, prison. . . .

This was the town where the music hall assumed enormous importance and is still the symbol of Edwardian fun. Enormous Coliseums and Alhambras were built. They could be seen in the streets, where Walter Sickert went to find the subjects for his best paintings. Marie Lloyd sang cockney songs, and after 1910 Gaby Deslys had more success there than in Paris, plumed and naked under the pearls given her by the king of Portugal. This charming girl, who died very young, sang in the language of the Entente Cordiale:

Sur la plage, sur la plage,
Men are full of persiflage.
When I take my bain de mer
All the boys just stand and stare.

To sing this, she wore a bathing costume. People loved postcards of bathing belles. Her songs were all recorded and have withstood the test of time better than the voices of Caruso and Melba. The horn gramophone so quickly adopted by the British, along with the mutt of His Master's Voice, became one of the symbols of their *Belle Epoque.*

Another passion, this time from the United States, the Gibson girls, was to some extent the equivalent of today's "bunnies." Showgirls with incredibly slim waists, superb chignons, dressed in evening gowns as depicted in Charles Dana Gibson's drawings, they were a mixture of the erotic and aristocratic ideals, ideals that Gladys Cooper brought to the stage, for obviously the public hardly liked anything but representations of the "high life." Only farces were given wealthy bourgeois settings. Men were usually comedians, but the handsome Lewis Waller, who in 1902 created M. Beaucaire (later one of Rudolph Valentino's great roles), was the first man to have a fan club, the members of which sported buttons engraved "K.O.W." (Keen on Waller). An absurd sort of dandy nicknamed the "knuts," always impeccably dressed, would stroll the lounges of the great music halls and sometimes had the honor of dining at the Savoy with a star. But there was no room in London for the great *demi-mondaines.* They would not have been admitted to the Ritz or the Savoy, their carriages would not have been allowed to parade in Hyde Park, and only men with no reputation would have been seen in their company. For that, one went to Paris.

Vienna, as we have seen, was very comparable to Paris, but

people had less money there; the Sacher was not as elegant as Maxim's, although most of its customers were more aristocratic than the upper middle class who formed the basis of the French clientele. Its women were entrancing. If Klimt's drawings are to be believed, and the erotic drawings of the strange Marquis de Byros, showing opulent creatures in rococo-*Jugendstil* beds surrendering to a thousand fantasies with hussars, little girls, or poodles. Sacher-Masoch was far more Viennese than Freud.

St. Petersburg had its famous island restaurants with their gypsies, but true connoisseurs sent for their mistresses from Paris or for preference went to join them on the Riviera.

The French and Italian Rivieras formed a separate country whose entire upper class came from practically everywhere to spend its money on pleasure and whose native population was engaged in waiting on the visitors, on selling them salads or all sorts of services at very high prices. The country only came to life in the winter. Villas and hotels were closed between Whitsun and All Saints' Day. It was not a haven, as Switzerland is today, for tax-threatened fortunes or from changes of government, but one had to be rich there, or at least appear to be so. As we have said, royalty paid long visits to the Riviera and mixed with Prussian princes disturbed by despotism, lords threatened by some scandal, Americans fleeing from Puritanism and looking for brilliant company, French ladies with good incomes and lovers too young for them, bankers who became respectable there, retired prima donnas, Egyptians and Turks on the spree. But it was the Russians who set the tone, from the grand duchess to the most broken of gamblers. There were also Rumanians and Italians, all of them some kind of prince. No fuss was made about the origin of titles in Rivieraland; the important thing was to have one. No one worried about the origin of fortunes either, as long as they were liberally expended. *Tout Paris* met one another there, all spruced up in the February sun. The *demi-mondaines* rented villas or apartments there according to their means. D'Annunzio travelled there from Florence for brief visits, Jean Lorrain wrote scandalous reports of its goings-on, but the gaming table was cultivated there in preference to literature. The nucleus of café society, which died away after World War II, was formed there. In July the habitués of the French Riviera met again happily in St. Moritz or Deauville, but they had been to London for the season and in Paris until the Grand Prix (the first Sunday in July). September would find the most delicate in Venice and the richest in Biarritz. Abel Hermant's novels entitled *Trains de Luxe (Luxury Trains)* and *Transatlantiques (Transatlantic Liners)* give us an idea of this itinerant world that had the pretensions of high society and the facilities of the *demi-monde* and who treated palaces like luxury hotels.

The *Belle Epoque* was indeed the age of the grand hotels; they became enormous, their entrance halls were floored with marble and walled with Gobelin tapestries, in that style cautiously known to Americans as "Louis." The Ritz, the Claridge, the Carlton, and the Savoy still retain an echo of the *Belle Epoque,* and the Plaza in New York more than any other with its Viennese palm court orchestra. The same decor was found in less important spas and gave "decent people" an idea of international life. In the Grand Hotel at Balbec, Proust noticed relationships between the social classes, which would never have had the opportunity of meeting elsewhere. That the Marquise de Villeparisis, the banker Nissim Bernard, and a presiding judge should be staying under the same roof would have been unthinkable thirty years earlier.

Alongside the development of grand hotels and for a comparable clientele, transatlantic liners grew enormous. A nation's prestige depended on its degree of luxury. The same as for naval fleets, rivalry was great between the German Nord-Amerika Line and the British White Star Line. The White Star had built a 46,000-ton ship called the *Titanic* whose progress could not be slowed down even by the fiercest storms. An iceberg cut it in two on its maiden voyage on April 14–15, 1912, and 1635 people's lives were lost. Announcing the news, the headline in the American newspapers read, "Mr. Astor drowned in mid-Atlantic," the 1634 other victims being of so much smaller importance than the millionaire! Incidentally, the second-class corridors were blocked to make room for the first-class passengers in the lifeboats. It has been said that the orchestra played the hymn "Nearer, My God, to Thee" as the ship was sinking. In fact it played Viennese waltzes. The catastrophe shook European optimism. Man had in fact not become master of the elements, as a generation fed on the novels of Jules Verne had been led to believe. The engulfment of the floating palace seemed to many like a warning.

However, this catastrophe in no way slowed down the taste for machinery, which had taken a hold on society, and the motorcar was soon to upset the rhythm of life completely. Speed became a new pleasure. In the nineties the bicycle had already given people an appetite for sport. It was a smart sport to begin with, because before the advent of mass production a bicycle cost as much as a small car today, but by about 1905 only the "poor" could not afford a "bike." Bicycle races attracted a huge public and a far more

Lou Tellegen, Photograph by Baron de Meyer. A matinée idol, Lou Tellegen is perhaps best remembered today for his brief engagement to Sarah Bernhardt. His character and life are best described by the title of his memoirs: *Women Have Been Kind*.



democratic one than race courses. Horseback riding became an upper-class sport.

The car took longer to be democratized. Until World War I it was an expensive and complicated machine. A mechanic—he was not yet known as a chauffeur—was needed to take care of it continually. And yet by 1910 in the moneyed classes, cars had almost completely supplanted horses. A statuette by Charles Sykes called *Spirit of Ecstasy* was chosen in 1911 to decorate the hood of the Rolls-Royce.

In capital cities, taxis and buses replaced hansom cabs and horse-drawn omnibuses. Life speeded up. People went for a day in the country instead of going to stay there for a week. Tourism began to grow. Edith Wharton took Henry James on a tour of French churches, D'Annunzio plowed Tuscany on the track of pretty women or in search of a ruin. Soon he would own an airplane. The lyricism of the hero of *Forse che sì, forse che no* flying toward the sun pushes to a climax the happiness that was to be that of sports lovers twenty years later. Skiers too—but not swimmers—began to discover that intoxication of the senses. The sport that developed fastest was tennis. Diaghilev created a ballet about it to music by Debussy. Perhaps Europeans of today could get the truest idea of a placid, middle-class *Belle Epoque* from a game of tennis played in the garden of a country house: the players impeccably dressed in white, refreshments awaiting them in a pavilion where the older people in light-colored clothes watch them, chatting. How many novels have described such summer scenes in the gardens of Richmond or St.-Cloud? Golf remained a smart sport, and to have an idea of the most luxurious sport, one must read the description of a polo match in a novel by Princess Bibesco. No yacht had a crew of fewer than ten.

Thus the *Belle Epoque* witnessed the change—thanks to a certain euphoria due to the plentiful circulation of money and the impression of a lasting state of equilibrium in spite of a few foreign wars (Cuba, Japan)—of an aristocratic society into a capitalistic one, the latter adopting the habits of the former. Ease of transport, big hotels, sport, the passion for theaters and parties brought together social groups very different in both upbringing and origin. There was an international pleasure group, the same stars were acclaimed in every capital, the same painters received orders in London, Paris, and New York. Another very important element in this popularizing of taste was the development of the illustrated weeklies with photographs supplied to them by international agencies. The readers of *L'Illustration* and the *Illustrated London News* were interested in the same things and wanted to see the same spectacles. The more expensive magazines, such as *Les Modes*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Vogue* in America, popularized a certain notion of "chic" with photographs and mainly through artists who presented an idealized image of the "high life." Court life seemed inaccessible fifty years earlier, but to lead the grand hotel life one needed only to earn enough to buy a good car and have a well-dressed wife.

This brings us to one of the most typical phenomena of the *Belle Epoque*, the importance given to *haute couture*. It is true that Charles Frederick Worth had dressed the Empress Eugénie and her court and that around 1900 there were some very famous couturiers, such as Doucet and Redfern; but it would never have been believed that they would become the international figures they are today or even that they would be received in "society." Paul Poiret changed all that, and with his reign the *Belle Epoque* announced its "years of madness."

The four years leading up to World War I were exceptionally brilliant from the artistic and social points of view. There had never been so many new and sparkling spectacles, such unexpected colors and sounds. Never had so many strikingly elegant women received so many artists. The framework of the old society of vast fortunes and the introduction of a foreign element allowed productions to be staged that seemed like theatrical parties in their setting, the luxuriousness of their costumes, and the beauty of their stars. The theater, the arts, and society, united at last, shook the public, who were at first shocked or amused and finally dazzled. These years were more like a fireworks display than a party with dazzling colors, rockets like osprey plumes, long necklaces of stars, flares like gauze veils. The wonder workers were called Diaghilev and Poiret. Everything has already been said about the Ballets Russes, their stage designers, their musicians, and their dancers. Poiret, his designers, and his customers are just beginning to be rediscovered. Both were despotic in the accomplishment of their dreams, impatient with anything that hindered their whims, unfair and generous, adored or mocked.

The fashion of the party years freed women from corsets and ankle boots, reduced the mass and weight of cloth and the volume of hats. Alone, Paul Poiret achieved this miracle of transforming the plenteous and corseted lady of 1900 into a slender veil-draped houri. The most daring women even began to wear trousers. So Diaghilev dressed the stage and Poiret the audito-

Lina Cavalieri. Anonymous photograph. Italian operatic soprano Lina Cavalieri sang in many leading European cities and in the United States at the Metropolitan Opera House (1906). In this photograph her delicate beauty is complemented by the dropped epaulette sleeves of her gown, which frame her magnificent shoulders and her bust crossed with heavy strands of pearls. In 1913 Lina married the French dramatic tenor Lucien Muratoré. Although she *was* Italian, it should be mentioned that almost all operatic singers of note "became" Italian, presumably because the musical audience during La Belle Epoque assumed, rather narrowly, that only Italians could satisfactorily sing opera.



rium. In a single season the women not dressed by him looked out of date. The misogynist Diaghilev left Nijinsky practically naked but stifled his women in jewelry; Poiret, who adored women, allowed the shapes of their bodies to be guessed at at last.

On June 24, 1911, the couturier astounded his establishment in the Faubourg St. Honoré, but let us allow Poiret himself to describe to us this One Thousand and Second Night, so often to be imitated: "The guests entered a drawing room where a half-naked Negro, draped in Bokhara silks and carrying a torch and a yataghan, gathered them together and led them to me. Then they crossed a sanded courtyard where, beneath a blue-and-gold awning, fountains played in porcelain basins. A multicolored light descended through the colors of the awning. They climbed a few steps and found themselves in front of an immense golden cage latticed with twisted fittings inside which I had locked my favorite (Mme. Poiret), surrounded by her maids in waiting, who were singing real Persian songs. Mirrors, sorbets, aquariums, small birds, veils, and feathers, these were the amusements of the queen of the harem and her attendants. Carpets covered the tiles of the doorstep and the sand of the pathways so that the sound of steps was muted and a profound silence reigned. The visitors, impressed, spoke in low voices as if in a mosque. In the middle of flower beds of embroidery stood the white cornelian vase. Lights hidden among the surrounding leaves lit it strangely. A thin jet of water escaped from it, and pink ibises walked all around to take their share of the coolness and the light. Some of the trees were covered in luminous dark-blue fruit, others bore berries of purple light. Live monkeys, macaws, and parrots enlivened all this greenery, which looked like the entrance to a great park.

"When my three hundred guests were assembled, I arose and, followed by all my wives, I advanced toward the cage of my favorite whom I set free. She escaped just as a bird would.... Then a cataract of fire crowned the palace, and suddenly the air was filled with a tearing sound. From the terrace overlooking the garden burst a rain of fire that cascaded down the steps. Now silver, now gold, this thrilling storm electrified the crowd, and when it subsided it left phosphorescent insects everywhere, caught in branches or suspended in midair."

The following year, two society women, Mmes. de Chabrilland and de Clermont-Tonnerre, gave Persian parties in their turn, and there all the jewels were real. Members of royal families followed the entertainment from galleries. And *L'Illustration* published four pages in color of the costumes. A year earlier there had been an article about colored wigs. That the "decent people's" magazine should suggest so many frivolities was very characteristic of the times; there were also articles on fashion, some illustrated with delightful drawings by Barbier, Lepape, and Marty, heralding the coming of Art Deco, and others with Sem's caricatures. There were reports of smart events at Deauville and at the races; chic became the ideal, as did speed. Both were offered by the motorcar.

Then there was the tango! It originated in the depths of Buenos Aires about 1910, and two years later it reigned supreme in the drawing rooms, having dethroned the more elegant Boston two-step. "Tango teas" were given in London. The tango was danced at noon on the boardwalk at Deauville. In short, it was a

Lord Ribblesdale, John Singer Sargent. Known as the "Ancestor" because of his Regency appearance, Lord Ribblesdale was asked by Sargent to pose for this painting. In it, dressed as Master of the Queen's Buckhounds, he exudes arrogance, ease, and patrician elegance from his top hat to his gleaming boots. A true aristocrat with deep respect for his kind, he chose for the motto of his memoirs the words of Chateaubriand: "I have guarded that strong love of liberty peculiar to an aristocracy whose last hour has sounded."

madness much more than a fashion, and belonged to the "mad years" much more than to the *Belle Epoque.* People began to talk of gigolos, and Latin American rhythms began to supersede Viennese melodies (the first jazz bands began to cross the Atlantic at the same time). The success of the lascivious dance alarmed the pope, and *L'Illustration* shows us Pius X watching a couple in black dancing the old and respectable Venetian forlane, which, if one had listened to him, would have supplanted the tango. Bridge reached us from Argentina, too, a development of whist. In Buenos Aires there was a glittering monument to that era, the Jockey Club. Eva Perón had it burned down.

Hobble-skirted dresses and enormous hats that left the face in shadow suited the *femmes fatales.* They often met with sad ends. The actress Lanthelme, wife of an extremely rich newspaper proprietor, fell or was pushed into the Rhine during a cruise. She had the most beautiful eyes in Paris. In Venice during the trial of a Polish countess accused of murder, the guard had to be changed every two hours, as one look from the beauty was enough to make them lose their heads. The "vamps" dated from before 1914 and were destined to be used by the cinema ten years later. But here again, do they really belong to the *Belle Epoque*? Not really. "Decent people" had an ideal much nearer to that of the eighteenth century. We shall not find the *Belle Epoque* ideal described in the great novels of the time—Thomas Mann of *The Magic Mountain,* John Galsworthy of *The Forsyte Saga,* and Roger Martin du Gard of *The World of the Thibaults* were too serious to linger over such matters—but rather in the novels and drawings published in *L'Illustration.*

The Parisienne is always in the foreground in drawings idealizing reality. She appears cool and impeccable, in Trans-Siberian Railway stations, blushing slightly as she congratulates bathing-costumed athletes in the Reims stadium, plumed on an icy road, the limousine that was to have taken her from her château to the Opéra having broken down, about to climb into the Santos Dumont airship or examining Louis Blériot's airplane. Parisiennes feature again in Gaston Latouche's great picture, *The Casino,* reproduced in color after its success at the 1914 Exhibition. Beneath a flowered pergola, sitting at small tables by the light of blue and pink lamps, women in evening dress dine with men in white tie and tails, in the distance the lights of a port, in the darkness the rockets of a firework display. Thanks to advances in photographic reproduction, even in color, after 1910 magazines became much closer to what they were to be thirty years later than to what they had been ten years earlier.

Looking through copies of *L'Illustration* from the years before the Great War, it seems that Europe was in the grip of a sort of fever; confidence gives way to a kind of agitation—brilliant, it is true, but worrying. Many pages are devoted to cars and airplanes, but also to the new armaments being tried out in the wars ravaging the Balkans. For a time attention is focussed on Albania, which had been given a German ruler—another operetta—then on Morocco, where "our brave Senegalese soldiers are fighting alongside the Legion" to retain dominion for France of an area Germany had tried to snatch from her by sending warships to Agadir. This failed coup meant that a Franco-German confrontation was inevitable. Ridiculous photographs of the Kaiser were published: at the time of the erection of the enormous monument commemorating the Battle of Leipzig, *L'Illustration* showed a photograph of the Arc de Triomphe, a "Latin taste," commemorating "172 French victories as compared with the German government's celebration of 350,000 allies who managed to polish off 157,000 Frenchmen." But here again, society keeps its oar in. A large drawing shows a reception at the German Embassy in honor of the new president, Poincaré, one of the men chiefly responsible for the war. Mme. Poincaré, divorced after leading an eventful life, looks somewhat ill at ease. When Alfonso XIII of Spain visited Paris, it was alone. The queen of Spain could not be asked to meet such a person. The British rulers were less difficult. Anxious at the growth of the German fleet, the British transformed their cautious Entente Cordiale into a tacit alliance.

Scandals grew apace, and after looking at the pictures in *L'Illustration* one should read the memoirs of Léon Daudet, who was the St.-Simon of the *Belle Epoque,* with its injustices, its gripping accounts, and its larger-than-life portraits. The dubious members of parliament, the ruined members of the bourgeoisie, and the corrupt judges on whom "decent people" did not wish Daudet to open their eyes were brought into the foreground of reality on March 21, 1914, when Mme. Caillaux, wife of the Minister of Finance, arrived at the offices of *Le Figaro* and coldly shot six bullets into the proprietor of that newspaper, M. Calmette, who had been leading a tough campaign against her husband, the Calmette who is remembered chiefly because Proust had just dedicated his book *Du Côté de Chez Swann (Swann's Way)* to him —but let us allow *L'Illustration* to express its own indignation:



"Mais non, Mademoiselle...," SEM (Georges Goursat). "But no, Mademoiselle, it is not HIM." These are the words that accompany this cartoon by the witty and satirical graphic artist SEM (see page 11), showing the very beautiful, exotic dancer Cléo de Mérode on the arm of a gentleman who is removing her from the sight of King Leopold of Belgium. However, Leopold lost no time in seeking the favors of Cléo and then the tolerance of his subjects in this matter. He received both, much to the scandalmongers' delight.

"Paris has just lived through a week of stupor. An unheard-of murder—a journalist shot down with an automatic to prevent the publication of political documents, the arrest of the wife of a minister, a man in the forefront of public life cast precipitately from the political scene, the revelation to the court of a scandalous document. A noisy and sinister hearing reminiscent of the darkest hours of the Convention—all these extraordinary events one after another have thrown public opinion into an incredible state of moral disarray. Never before in the history of our society has the voice of the pistol produced such profound and alarming echoes."

The verdict acquitting Mme. Caillaux seemed to D'Annunzio like the sign of a national decline of which his own decline was the reflection. The poet had lived in France for three years. Countless feminine conquests in every milieu did not compensate him for the failure of his plays. It should be remembered that in spite of Debussy's music and Bakst's costumes, *The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian* had seemed unbearably boring. After several meetings with "a lady above all suspicion," D'Annunzio discovered that he had caught a venereal disease. He immediately proclaimed the news. Wasn't it extraordinary, at the age of fifty and for the first time, after leading such a life as his? But for himself he wrote: "I feel that I have received the truly degrading badge of Paris, the truly unspeakable and undeserved punishment." The year 1914 began very badly: "Life in Paris is a ferment of decay." The Caillaux affair, like an abscess, served to drain away all its degradations and allowed a sweet bitterness to be drawn from it. "Eternal France" seemed to him at its lowest ebb. Had she not voted to the left, which meant reducing the length of military service and bringing her closer to Germany? During a conversation with Maurice Paléologue, the ambassador in Russia, he made no attempt to hide his disappointment with his adoptive country: "The crisis that France has just undergone has shaken every fiber of my patriotism. We are living in an infamous time under the tyranny of a proletariat. Never has the Latin spirit sunk so low. . . . A great national war is the only hope felt for salvation. Only war can stop the decline of a degenerate race."


Mais non, Mademoiselle ce n'est pas LUI !



Rita de Acosta Lydig, Photograph by Baron de Meyer. Much photographed because of her extravagant beauty, Rita de Acosta Lydig fascinated New York society for the first fifteen years of the twentieth century. Her costumes were legendary. This photograph is unusual and justly famous because it shows, gloriously, a heretofore-unseen part of a woman's body, her back. The dictates of fashion had released women from their straightjackets: bones and laces gave way to graceful draping and low-cut backs became more enticing than the décolletage so prevalent during the early years of La Belle Epoque.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

LENDERS TO THE EXHIBITION

Robert Altman, New York
Aquascutum, London
The Brooklyn Museum
Castle Howard, York, England
Eric Chauvet, Geneva
Chicago Historical Society
Thomas A. Emmet, New York
Fashion Institute of Technology, New York
Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice
Fondazione del Vittoriale, Milan
Vincent Fourcade, New York
Huntsman, London
Kyoto Costume Institute
Lady Alexandra Metcalfe, London
Minnesota Historical Society, Museum Collections, St. Paul
Moss Brothers, London
Musée de la Mode et du Costume, Paris
Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris
Musée du Petit Palais, Paris
Park South Gallery at Carnegie Hall, New York
Posters Please, Inc., New York
Shannon Rogers, New York
François Gerard Seligmann, Paris
Meredith Etherington Smith, London
Dona Bernard C. Solomon
Ann Tham, London
Umberto Tirelli, Rome
Madame Tussaud's, London
Jerome Zipkin, New York
Private Collection, California
Private Collection, New York

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are deeply grateful to Pierre Cardin *for his generosity in making the exhibition possible; to* André Oliver *and* Ghislaine de Polignac *for their continuing help and encouragement; and to* Pierre Pothier *for his invaluable assistance in the design of the exhibition.*

We are also grateful to Umberto Tirelli *for organizing our loans from Italy; to* Geoffrey Aquilina Ross *for his work on our behalf in Great Britain; to* Jean-Paul Scarpitta *for his assistance in Paris; to* Beppe Modenese *who provided us with sources for costumes and mannequins; and to the* Newport Historical Society *for information and aid in locating costumes.*

We would like to express our appreciation to Jack Rennert *who coordinated the display of original posters; to* Kurt Thometz *for locating important research material; to* Robert Rappaport *for lithographs of the period; to the* Prints and Photographs Department of Sotheby's *for providing photographs by de Meyer; to* Jack Goldman *for arranging for the restoration of the beading on Queen Alexandra's gown; and to* Caroline Melczer *for her work on that project.*

The music for the exhibition was compiled and arranged by Stephen Paley. *The scent in the air is "L'Heure Bleue" by* Guerlain. *The beautiful backdrops in the galleries were painted by* Charles Broderson. *Jewelry is by* Kenneth J. Lane *with the assistance of* Kirk Allan Adair. *Stockings are by* Capezio *and by* Laura Biagotti. Clarence House *made special arrangements for us to use their wallpaper Fragonard. Corsets for the mannequins were made by* Paul Rheinhardt *and his students at the University of Texas. Male mannequins were lent by* Hindsgaul.

We are grateful to the Fondation de France *for giving us permission to reprint the essay by Philippe Jullian and to* Katell le Bourhis *who has been of invaluable assistance in the preparation of the catalogue for this exhibition.*

We are grateful to the International Herald Tribune, *which, thanks to the archives of its earlier existence as the Paris edition of the New York* Herald, *was able to supply us with background material for the exhibition and illustrations for this catalogue. In this regard we would like to specifically thank* Glenda Cudabak *and* Bruce Singer. *We are particularly indebted to* Hebe Dorsey, *fashion editor of the* International Herald Tribune, *who has enthusiastically supported the project from its inception. Miss Dorsey is currently writing a book on the period drawing on the newspaper's archives, to be published by Thames and Hudson.*

STAFF OF COSTUME INSTITUTE

Stella Blum, Curator
Diana Vreeland, Special Consultant
K. Gordon Stone, Associate Museum Librarian
Paul M. Ettesvold, Assistant Curator
Jean R. Druesedow, Assistant Curator
Judith Jerde, Assistant for Restoration
Lillian A. Dickler, Senior Administrative Assistant
Elaine F. Shaub, Assistant to the Consultant
Irja Zimbardo, Senior Housekeeper
Dominick Tallarico, Principal Department Technician
Mavis Dalton, Associate Curator, part-time

Many thanks to the staff members of the following departments for their advice and assistance in the mounting of this exhibition:

European Paintings
Twentieth Century Art
European Sculpture and Decorative Arts
Prints and Photographs
Registrar
Objects Conservation
Paper Conservation
Public Information
Office of the Vice President for Operations
Design
Buildings
Security
Office Service
Photograph Studio
Telephone Switchboard
Information Desk

EXHIBITION STAFF

Exhibition conceived and organized by Diana Vreeland
Assistant to Mrs. Vreeland: Stephen Jamail
Exhibition Assistants: Katell le Bourhis, Richard DeGussi-Bogutski, Sarah Richardson
Exhibition Design: Jeffrey Daly, David Harvey, Paul Hunter
Lighting: William L. Riegel
Installation Assistants: June Bové, Stephen de Pietri

VOLUNTEERS FOR RESTORATION

Ethel Altschul
Pauline C. Anderson
Penelope Bareau
Lucy Buhler
Barbara Chafkin
Miriam Chan
Abigail Chapman
Anita Child
Lucinda Childs
Helen Clark
Clothilde Daniel
Emily Derenberg
Helen DiBlasio
Millicent Dworkin
Ruth Ehrlich
Virginia Ferguson
Barbara Finch
Jane Fiore
Judith Buford Flaxman
Antonia Govani
Ellen D. Granick
Madelyn Brown Harris
Norma Piche Hensler
Svea Eleanor Holborow
Susan Johnston
Giza Kent
Ilse Kessler
Joel Kunath
Ann Langford-Hamber
Charlotte Liebow
Edna Lonstein
Lee Messmore
Jane D. Miller
Ann Nielson
Helen S. Olsen
Eleanor Powell
Laura Reiburn
Ann Robbins
Lillian Rouse
Sarah Rowe
Mary Russoniello
Kuniko Steel
Lily Tobler
Ann Wiss

VOLUNTEERS FOR THE INSTALLATION

Kirk Allan Adair
Margaret Avery
Francesca Bianco
Nadine Bilgore
Marine le Bourhis
Ellen Burnie
Russell Bush
Judy Brindisi
Lesley Cowen
Eugenia Eschman
Douglas Ferguson
Marie Figliolia
Frances Fore
Virginia Fox
Elizabeth Goldrick
Ana Herrera
Flora Husband
Issabel Isqueda
Joel Kaye
Harriet Keramidas
Alida Kilburn
Andrew Kohler
Ruth Kohler
Lisa Kung
David Leigh
Georgette Levy
Gabriella Mariotti
Emmanuel Michaux
Ann Miller
Madge Miller
Deborah Polonoff
Nancy Präger-Benett
Lucy Richards
Randy Sheer
Jocelyn Schwartzman
C.J. Scott
Helen Semler
Cynthia Sirko
Marie-Louise Slocum
Sophia Tzelepis
Linda Velez
Robert Vitale
Terry Wendell
Patricia Whetzel
Phyllis Wickham
Marielle Worth
Peter Wrigley

List incomplete at printing


LA DÉPÊCHE
COLLABORATEURS POLITIQUES
MM.
Jean FRONTIÈRE
Henri BRISSON
Jean JAURÈS
PIERRE et PAUL
Dr TOULOUSE
C. BOUGLÉ
MM.
AULARD
G. CLEMENCEAU
Camille PELLETAN
FRANÇAIS
LEMASSON
COLLABORATEURS LITTÉRAIRES
MM.
Ed. HARAUCOURT
Léon MILLOT
Octave UZANNE
WEULERSSE
MM.
B. MARCEL
RÉMO
Edouard CONTE
Gustave GEFFROY